

CONTEMPORARY
EUROPEAN WRITERS

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BY

WILLIAM A. DRAKE



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To
IRITA VAN DOREN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM A. DRAKE was born at Dayton, Ohio, in 1899. He early became interested in comparative literatures and social history, and has pursued these subjects through a consistent and largely independent course of study. He has been engaged in newspaper work, reporting and editorial writing, and has done advertising, promotion and publicity work. He came to New York in 1922, where he became managing editor of *Vanity Fair*, and, in 1924, foreign editor of the New York *Herald Tribune's* literary supplement, *Books*.

Mr. Drake is the author of *The War Poetry*, and *American Criticism*, 1926; the translator of Arthur Schnitzler's *Daybreak* and *Therese*, Bruno Frank's *Twelve Thousand*, and Panait Istrati's *The Bandits*; co-translator of Count Hermann Keyserling's *The Book of Marriage* and Franz Werfel's *The Man Who Conquered Death*. His adaptation of Franz Werfel's *Schweiger* was produced in New York in 1926 and his adaptation of *Twelve Thousand* is being currently produced. He has also written numerous articles, poems and translations which have appeared in various literary and general periodicals.

FOREWORD

I PRESENT this volume with a diffidence which the reader will, I think, perfectly understand. It is difficult to write of one's contemporaries, for the examples of literary history prove ever again that the process of growth is never finally completed in an active spirit, and that present truths are often false at the moment of utterance. The intellectual atmosphere of our epoch is, moreover, so extraordinarily fecund and willful, and the hitherto well-marked frontiers of our social order are extending themselves with such impatient audacity into strange and uncharted provinces, that the task of pronouncing upon those manifestations of the modern spirit which are the hope of our to-morrow is one only to be approached, tentatively, and in the desire of understanding. •

In considering the writers mentioned in this book, I have therefore chosen rather to err on the side of confidence than on the side of denial. I have wished merely to investigate for myself and to pass on to others what I have found of interest and merit, and not at all to usurp the prerogatives of exact judgment properly belonging to Time and to my betters. My choice of subjects has been conditioned by the enterprise for which most of these sketches were originally composéd; and, I may add, most of those which I have been so privileged to write upon deserve a more thoughtful and organic treatment than I have been able to give them. But if my presumable readers, in behalf of the effort which this book represents

to give a sympathetic account of the work which certain of our European contemporaries are in the process of achieving, will be inclined to forgive the plainness of my narrative and the deliberate reticence of my opinions, they will have done the gracious thing of accepting my slight contribution in the spirit in which it is offered.

Save for the essays on Montesquieu and Werfel, which appeared respectively in *The Nation* and *The Theatre Arts Monthly*, all of these sketches were first published in the "Books Abroad" department of *Books*, the literary supplement of the New York *Herald Tribune*. Those on Wassermann and Werfel have been reprinted in *The American Hebrew*, and various others have been reprinted, in whole or in part, in the foreign language press here and abroad. I am indebted to the Editors of these periodicals for permission to make use of this material, and to the Editors of *The Saturday Review of Literature* for certain passages of the essay on Proust. I am further indebted to Dr. Jaroslav Kraus, Dr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Dr. Joshua Bloch, Dr. S. S. Lontos, Mr. Salvo Viola, Miss Emma Osterberg, Miss Lilian Lewis, and Miss Anna C. Reque for assistance in verifying the bibliographies. My debt to those of my contemporaries who have preceded me in the various departments of this field is beyond estimation.

WILLIAM A. DRAKE.

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23 December, 1927.

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MARCEL PROUST

THE canonization of Marcel Proust by the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and the younger critics has so confused our perspectives that we shall need another decade to fix this modern Petronius in his true qualities as an artist. The mere physical impressiveness of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, the fable of the author's neurasthenia and his eminence in the fashionable world, the accident of his death at the moment when the last words of his masterpiece had been written, and the unprecedented campaign of immortalization which followed that event, are influences not easily resisted. This writer, whose books, before they were taken over by the most energetic publisher in France, had evoked only moderate praise, was accorded at his death, an obituary homage comparable to that of Anatole France. The world's opinion might well be seduced. Marcel Proust was carried to fame on the tide of the most enormous exploitation scheme ever planned to make a writer of essentially limited appeal a best-seller.

The world has had frequent occasion to remark the swift forgetfulness which usually succeeds quick notoriety. To a creative artist such sudden elevation is fraught with perils. The public misunderstands his position, expects too much of him or praises him fatuously, and invariably ends by turning away from his works in sheer boredom. That the reputation of Marcel Proust has, on the contrary, become the more firmly estab-

lished, that his works have been found to deserve the admiration of a remarkably varied public, that inimical criticism, in rending the deceits of adulation, has revealed him as a creative artist of the first order, even in this short time, is emphatic of the validity and the high quality of his talent. There can be little doubt even now that Marcel Proust is actually, as he has been called, the most remarkable literary phenomenon of our generation, and *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* its outstanding literary tour de force.

The life history of Marcel Proust, though simple, is an apt setting for one of those legends in which the hero-making world so much delights. Born on the 10th of July 1871, the son of a well-to-do professor of medicine in the University of Paris and of a Jewish mother, Proust set out to realize his world. He has been called a snob because his quest took him to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, but those who have read his autobiographical narrative with sympathy know that he went there merely as an explorer. There is no doubt that he not only gained entrance to the most exclusive salons, but enjoyed an extraordinary personal success among those resolute last supporters of the Ancien Régime, the decadent nobility and the haute bourgeoisie. He published in 1896 a collection of sketches called *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* (which bore an introduction signed by Anatole France, but actually written by the prodigious Madame de Caillavet), translations of two of Ruskin's works, and the curious and significant series of parodies, *Pastiches et Mélanges*. Then, overcome by the malady which had tormented him since childhood, he practically retired to the life of an invalid

recluse. He was so extraordinarily sensitive that he had to wear overshoes in dry weather, and a cork-lined room did not suffice to defend him from the noises of the city. He could not endure ventilation, and the opening of an outside door five floors below painfully irritated his asthma and sent him into fits of coughing. He slept in the day and worked through the night, devoting the years which he knew could not be many to the great work which he barely lived to complete. *Du Côté de chez Swann*, after having been taken the rounds of the metropolitan publishers, was published by Bernard Grasset (at Proust's expense) in 1913 and was received favorably, although without enthusiasm. The Proust vogue came with the reissue of this and the publication of the succeeding volumes by the reorganized Nouvelle Revue Française in 1919, when *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* was awarded the Prix Goncourt, and especially after the death of the author, on the 18th of November 1922. How well the work deserves the celebrity to which the accident of events and clever publicity have raised it is seen, and is still to be seen, in the continued favor in which Proust is held by a discerning public after his legend has ceased to attract and the mists of sentimentality have begun to clear away.

"There is," says Tyndall, "in the human intellect a power of expansion—I might almost call it a power of creation—which is brought into play by the simple brooding upon facts." Proust exemplifies this type of speculative activity more strikingly than any other novelist. *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* is neither an autobiographical novel nor the memoir of a life's experiences. It is a superb improvization upon a theme,

like a violinist's obbligato to some difficult concerto. In it the author is, in the fullest sense of each, at once the protagonist and spectator. Only in the last volumes is admitted what one had known from the first, that Marcel Proust is the narrator of his own tale. Yet to a degree which we have never before encountered in literature he is able to objectify his experiences, his observations, his meetings, his very self, and to annotate them all with the same precise analysis, the same detail, the same ironic yet humane detachment. That is why he has been able to give us, within the brief pilgrimage of his own life, a score of various lives, and to show us the whole anatomy of the exhausted and unimaginative society in which he lived.

Proust's literary virtuosity is so broad that nearly every critic, in writing of him, has named him a different master. It is now apparent that this soft-spoken, exquisite young Parisian took from literature, as from society, all that he could comfortably absorb into his own genius,* and in so choosing made those qualities his own. Ruskin contributed to his apprehension of beauty, but no more than Claude Monet. The later Henry James may have influenced his style, but no one with the slightest feeling for style could say that the manner of Proust conspicuously resembles that of Henry James. Stendhal gave him much, and Flaubert perhaps more than any other novelist. Balzac, though he lacks the sureness of Proust's conceptions as much as his perfect art, likewise contributed, as did so utterly dissimilar a writer as Chateaubriand. The essays on style in *Pastiches et Mélanges* are a catalogue of acknowledgments of Proust's debts to Balzac, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve,

Régnier, the Goncourts, Michelet, Faguet, Renan, and Saint-Simon.

It is undoubtedly to Saint-Simon that Proust can be most immediately compared. Disappointed with the highest society of France, aware of the insufficiencies of the great, and spending the last thirty years of his life in an almost complete retirement, yet indefatigably inquisitive concerning all the proceedings and the personages at Versailles, the disgruntled defender of the Ducal privileges accomplished in his *Mémoires* a feat very similar to that of Proust in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. "The complicated but perfectly controlled knowledge, the enthusiasm for a 'situation' which Saint-Simon put into the discussion of some problem of precedence, some Court manoeuvre, are devoted by Proust to the modern interests of psychological analysis, a nuance of sentiment, a delicate relationship, an appreciation of some fine distinction," says Richard Aldington. "When he describes so minutely the exact manner and air in which Swann raised his hat during a certain period of his life, or renders that amazing dinner party with Monsieur Norpois, Proust is definitely doing for his age and generation what Saint-Simon did for his. The conditions, the 'data' of the problem are all changed; the method is the same. It is Proust's misfortune that he is dealing in fact—in spite of certain exceptions which remain like fine old houses in a modern street—only with a luxurious bourgeoisie, preoccupied essentially with what is 'chic' as distinct from what is cultured. He feels the lack of an established aristocracy, which was so precious an asset to Saint-Simon. And inasmuch as Proust's own intelligence is aristocratic, he is an anachronism. He suf-

fers in the same way as Renan, who could never find a place in an omnibus because he was too polite to precede another passenger. He lacks that ordered state of society where an exquisite refinement of this kind is foreseen and compensated by privileges."

The similarity of Saint-Simon and Proust, apart from obvious "method" and literary artifice, lies in a simple creative remembering of past events. The genius of the latter resides primarily in this process, because in his reflections images are superimposed upon images and transfigured within a very plausible reality, incidents and mannerisms observed with infinite subtlety, and the dense filigree of his philosophical and critical thought is spun out to intricate and significant conclusions. He has fixed his mind upon the past, and in recalling it has summoned up all its images in their varied forms, dissected and restored them at leisure, and assigned them their places in a slow pageant which moves—and this is his singularity—not back into the recesses of the past, but toward the rising sun of a new day. Shy, retrospective, sensitive to the point of anguish, Proust cherishes every detail of his past; but there is nothing of the taste of the irrevocably lost about his reflections, because his acute and receptive spirit could bring those dead things into instant correspondence with all the promises of the future. This spirit, as much as his form, reclaims *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* for the main stream of the French classic tradition, of which it is the logical culmination and perfect flowering. It is a shining and immortal mixture of Saint-Simon, Flaubert, and Balzac; nerves, irony, and pure genius.

The most curious element of Proust's method is his

employment of remotely associated, but marvelously suggestive memories—the not uncommon psychological phenomenon known as mnemonic combination, by which images unrelated to those immediately before the spectator are awakened in the mind through new groupings of stimuli which in other combinations had previously impressed him and left retention traces easily reanimated in his excessively sensitive nervous system. The examples are as familiar as they are multitudinous. This trick of flash-back, which was probably a very real part of Proust's daily experience, proves, beneath the hand of one who employs it creatively and legitimately, a literary device of limitless possibilities. It is thoroughly convincing, doubtless because in this instance it possesses the eloquence of actuality; and it has the valuable result of obliterating at once the problem of time and location, permitting the author to jump the life that has been, indulging recollections of incidents, often of the most trivial nature, which occurred in his childhood fifteen years before and have no apparent connection with the present action. The whole of life filters through the eye of this quiet narrator. He accepts the truisms that the world is only what it appears to the eye of the spectator and that each spectator invests every object which comes beneath his gaze with the veritable qualities which he himself possesses or the fictitious qualities to which he aspires. This accounts, in Proust, for the ashen bitterness of his realities, for the Dead Sea fruit of his dreams experienced; for it is only when he stands completely in the past that he stands in the radiance of hope. It likewise accounts for the perfectly sustained subjectivity of his entire narrative, and in equal measure this sub-

jectivity explains the sense one gets from it of consistently spontaneous creation.

Another psychological trick important to the appreciation of Proust's method is his astounding intuition of the discontinuity of human personality. One of the most devastating propositions advanced in modern physics is the now well-known Quantum theory, which suggests among other things that matter is not continuous, but diffuse. Proust's observation of life has led him to an identical presumption with regard to the human personality. It is to this that he refers when he speaks of "the intermittences of the heart." The human personality, to Proust, is in constant flux. It is not the same today as it was yesterday, and one is a different man at ten o'clock than he was at nine-thirty. The entrance of another person into a drawing room, the announcement of dinner, the altering of a table or a coiffure changes, at that moment and from that particular focal point, to ever so slight a degree, the whole center of the universe. The young writers of France have more to say upon this subject than Proust, but none demonstrate this equation so convincingly. To them, it is a literary artifice. To Proust, it is a fundamental reality, which colors with a fundamental skepticism his attitude to every appearance of life.

"If Proust is first of all a novelist of tremendous ability," wrote Richard Aldington shortly before Proust's death, "he is also an acute critic, a philosopher in morals and a writer of contemporary history. His work is the first attempt at a synthesis of modern European civilization, localized at a point of intensity. *A la Recherche du*

Temps Perdu . . . has so many roots, so many intentions; it is packed so full of meaning, of thought and observation that it is a kind of literature in itself." Similarly, Paul Valéry writes: "Proust knew how to adjust the powers of a rich and curiously wrought interior life to the expression of a little society which means to be, and is, superficial. Through this process, the picture of a superficial society becomes a profound work."

. As everybody knows, Parisian society in the Nineties was dull, stilted, and meretricious almost to cheapness. Proust approached this society on its sentimental side, which was the last stronghold of its genius: and out of these seemingly impossible materials created a masterpiece of detailed portraiture and interpretation which will almost alone suffice to give that society remembrance. His places, his characters have all been identified in fact. His artistic honesty has been proved repeatedly by the rage of Caliban at perceiving his own face in the glass.

It becomes apparent, when one has finished the last volume of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, that "that invisible vocation of which these volumes are the history," to which Proust so piously refers, is in reality a mission of self-salvation. Harassed in body and mind by the infirmities of the flesh and the anguish of vindictive nerves, disappointed in life by the emptiness of all his triumphs upon its guarded heights, uncertain and disoriented, he may well have written this amazing autobiography in a resolute effort to recapture the lost fragrance that he had of life before he had known its insufficient bloom; by retracing all his steps, to live again

in his living tomb and discover, if not the wherefore, at least the appearances of his world and himself to his own spirit.

And in the writing all becomes lucid before him. The past spreads out in a wide, grateful panorama. Incidents and allusions which had passed unnoted become in later years the keys to consequential happenings. He gains, without metaphysics of any kind, a deep, sure instinct into the secret motives of the heart. He observes the eternal significance of all things in the march of Nature: how events are elaborated in an infinity of discursive episodes or how they fulfill themselves sharply in a single gesture; how life is filled with a prodigal, golden waste: but how in retrospect every happening is seen to join with another in another season and, multiplying in a succession of happenings, rejoin the unending stream of life within its ample banks. He observes how the complexity of Nature is simple, how her abundance is scrupulous, and how she receives equally to her bosom the best and the most depraved of the creatures made in her likeness. Marcel Proust, as an interpreter of life, could not do less than model his style upon this eternal pattern.

JEAN GIRAUDOUX

ONE turns to each new novel by Jean Giraudoux in the expectation of pleasure and with a secure confidence that that expectation will not be disappointed. Nothing that Giraudoux has written is devoid of merit, and the dignified procession of his books since the war has placed him in a unique and substantial position among the younger writers of France. For Giraudoux, although he treats it with satirical levity, obviously takes literature seriously. Perhaps he can do so because he is not a professional writer, his days being devoted to the delicate occupation of telling newspaper correspondents what the French Foreign Office prefers them to believe about its activities. Perhaps this sentiment, so exceptional in our epoch, arises from the circumstances that Giraudoux was educated at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, where the humanities are still somewhat esteemed. Perhaps it is because, in his youth, some good angel of appreciation took him back to the rich half-century which Voltaire, Fontenelle, and Diderot graced. Whatever the cause, in Giraudoux we have a writer with a sense of form and possessed of a subtle, flexible, and essentially classical prose style, who, although he has contented himself with being amusing, does not descend to triviality, and who has achieved the modern equivalent of original expression, without having had to resort to the chicaneries of incomprehensibility affected by his bright contemporaries.

Giraudoux's first book, *Les Provinciales*, was pub-

lished in 1909, when the author was twenty-seven years old. It is a realistic, but highly subjective, description of the departments of France, especially that colorful southern province which Marcelle Tinayre has so charmingly described in *L'Ombre de l'Amour*, the Limousin of his own later novels. The book was a popular success, and immediately secured its young author a favorable reputation. It is not distinguished, in either conception or execution, beyond the ordinary limits of competence; but it is filled with a rare feeling for character and for beauty in its every appearance; and in its delicately stressed portraiture and its occasional subterranean slynesses of description, it already shows the beginnings of the satirical criticism which was to become the dominating characteristic of Giraudoux's literary method.

After completing the rigorous course of study at the famous old Government normal college, Giraudoux became a professor, then secretary of the Parisian daily *Le Matin*, and finally, a member of the diplomatic service. In this last occupation he has, with one interruption, remained ever since, having risen in it to a position of considerable importance. That interruption was his term of military service during the war, in the course of which he was twice wounded in action, decorated, and thereafter invalided to the United States as a guest instructor in the officers' training school at Harvard University. His *Amica America* remains one of the most intelligent observations of contemporary American life in the French language.

Giraudoux published little during these years, but the ripeness of his present style attests the stamp of much

writing. His early efforts were devoted to experimentation and self-inquiry, chiefly in the difficult genre of poetical prose, which he essayed in a great variety of forms. At that time, he was torn between the contrary allurements of lyricism and humor; he has since, with what refreshing results we know, achieved a singularly perfect amalgamation of both. It required the impact of the war to galvanize him to mature literary activity. His *Lecture pour une Ombre* is one of the very few war books which can still be read without mental regurgitations, for it is a work of high literary merit, and discloses an intelligence still clear and humane, which the passion of offended patriotism has not reduced to sentimentality or bigotry.

The novels which Giraudoux has since published have established him in a singular position in contemporary French literature. He remains a gifted amateur, a sort of exalted spectator of the incessant battle of books, who now and then stretches forth a hypocritically deprecatory hand to thrust some trifle of his own into the fray. First, in 1918, it was *Simon le Pathétique*. Then, after a few intermediate interjections, came *Suzanne et le Pacifique*, that delectably coy satire on the Robinson Crusoe-South Sea Island novel, that deliciously true and deliriously improbable commentary on the feminine nature. Then, that extraordinary picture of the wildest and most poetical province of France, that romance of the human mind recreating itself within itself, *Siegfried et le Limousin*. Then, *Juliette au Pays des Hommes*, a companion-piece to *Suzanne et le Pacifique* in its mad satire of the romantic fancies of a young girl who has, however, sufficient good sense to free her mind of their deceits by putting

them to the proof, and to accept their emptiness with a shrug.

Juliette au Pays des Hommes is an excellent example of the Giraudoux novel in its most characteristic development, and in view of this, we shall take the liberty of dwelling briefly upon it. It is a most amusing anecdote. The delightful thing about Giraudoux is that he never makes one laugh, seldom makes one chuckle, yet keeps one suspended in an agreeable state of placid and rather ironical amusement. He effervesces, but, thank God! he does not bubble over. Giraudoux is uncommonly intelligent, and he knows it uncommonly well; but this does not betray him into misconceptions concerning man's place in the scheme of things. He is sophisticated and irreverent, but he is not cynical. He is mannered, but he detests affectations. He has become "smart," but he does not feel that this election places him under the necessity of living up to his blue china.

Juliette is the younger sister of Suzanne, and, like her prototype, she is exquisite and irresistible. Having got herself engaged to a neighboring country squire, she dashes off for a holiday before the great event. Not that she does not love the handsome, affable, complaisant young man whom she is about to marry. But matrimony is a serious business, and Juliette is young. She fancies that she ought to have her fling, or she may not be quite up to the Holy State. Besides, there are several young men whom she thinks it well to investigate before she commits herself to anything so permanent as the desideratum which she is confident her marriage will prove. For Juliette, despite her apparent lack of maidenly reserve, is very old school, and she is very wise.

With a forethought that cannot but awaken admiration, Juliette has carefully inscribed in a notebook the names and known characteristics of these promising young men. One is a certain R. B., a breeder of bizarre animals, of whom she has heard two ladies in a railway carriage speak in the highest terms. Another is Emmanuel Ratié, to whose heroism in rescuing a young man from drowning, at Palavas, she had missed being the breathless witness by an exasperating five minutes. A third is an archeologist whom she admires in spite of his preposterous cognomen, which is Willoughby Patterne. Then, there is Lemañon, an author; and a Russian dancer, romantically yclept Boris Semaloff, concludes her catalogue of eligibles.

Juliette has no immediate idea where these gentlemen may be found, but she is a determined young woman, and she goes about her quest with an ingenious strategy which ought to commend her highly to any detective bureau. Her faculty of concentration, the singleness of purpose which she brings to each particular case under inquiry at the moment, is beyond belief. One after another, she searches out her prospects; and one after another, they disappoint her expectations. But at each disillusionment, she proceeds to the next in order with an undismayed heart and with unfaltering purpose. Rodrique Blanchemarine, the first on the list, turns out to be a snake breeder at the Pasteur Institute; but he has already passed to his reward, in consequence of a momentary lapse of professional caution. The hero of Palavas is already married, and he is, moreover, an ass. The archeologist is another; and at the moment, he is much too excited over the imminent arrival of a relic from the period

of Sassanides to take any heed of the anxious young girl. The author reads her the "monologue intérieur" which he has just composed in the manner of Joyce, and bores her to distraction. Unlike most novelists who tell of the masterpieces which flow from the inspired pens of their characters, Giraudoux reproduces this in full; and the "Prière sur la Tour Eiffel" is a gorgeous bit of writing. The Russian dancer proves too fluent and too determined in his love-making. So Juliette, resigned to respectability, returns to Limousin and to her patient lover. Her month has not been badly spent, and if she is henceforth deprived of pleasant conceits of life and love beyond the hedge that secludes her rural home, the process of her disillusionment has at least provided the subject-matter of an exceedingly agreeable book.

Giraudoux's accomplishment in prose resembles, in a modest degree, that of the Impressionists in the sister art of painting. He has contrived to convey, through the exclusion of detail and the accentuation of dominant traits, by fantastic situations, paradoxical metaphors, and ingenious concatenations of adjectives, various sequences of exceptionally vivid impressions. He has achieved a further originality by employing this novel method in the service of satire—and satire so fundamentally human that, though the informed can read a second meaning into all of his conceptions, they remain to others sufficiently amusing in themselves. Without exalted pretensions of any kind, he has achieved considerable originality, and a highly perfected and provocative expression, within the limitations of his method.

Giraudoux's *Bella* suggests an impending transition in the author's style. While it possesses all the characteris-

tics of his earlier novels, *Bella* has an added note of serious realism which dominates the book above its author's habitual levity. Even the satire which the character of the ferocious Rebendart (Henri Poincaré?) provokes, is more bitter and purposeful than Giraudoux's earlier lightly caricatured portraits. Briefly, the story concerns an unreasonable feud between two prominent families, the one bourgeois and the other intellectual, and the efforts of a splendid woman, whose marriage and widowhood have affiliated her with the one while her second love joins her to the other, to reconcile their differences. She is not successful and, in the end, she dies without even the reward that her devotion to Philippe Dubardeau has deserved. Nothing comes of her defiance and her sacrifices. But it is the kind of story which makes one pause to weigh the validity of one's own animosities. The details of the quarrel between the Rebendarts and the Dubardeaus are sordid and miserable, but through the whole of its futile length, the figure of this sincere, sympathetic, absolutely fair-minded woman who would be a peacemaker, and who is blessed for her pains in the exact Biblical sense, moves like a star of sanity amid a waste of arid bitterness. How definite a part of Giraudoux's creative consciousness this social earnestness, which we had noted before in *Siegfried et le Limousin*, is destined to become, the future will tell.

JEAN COCTEAU

TO write appropriately of the versatile accomplishments of Jean Cocteau—to pay him, so to speak, just tribute in the coin of his own realm—one should have to borrow an esoteric eloquence from the special vocabulary of compliment which Cocteau has himself employed in writing of the genius of Pablo Picasso. Since such a resort, in this land habituated to plain ideas and forthright expression, could only result in mystification and obloquy, we shall resist, in the ensuing recital, every temptation to interpret the phenomenon of Jean Cocteau in terms of the transcendental, and content ourselves with remarking a few of the most obvious characteristics of his work, as these appear to an American public.

For more than fifteen years, Cocteau has stood before the French and the more curious English-speaking publics as the veritable playboy of artistic Paris, the first champion of the most advanced movements in all the arts, and the most precocious dilettante in a society which, in our generation, has sensibly accorded to dilettantism in the arts a respectful audience which it has lacked since the eighteenth century and the still more spacious days of the Renaissance. For Cocteau, by the very nature of his talent, is a dilettante. He is the preëminent type, in our own time, of the gentleman of fashion, the man of the world, who is interested in the arts, not at all for their own sake, but for the flavor which they lend to life; who seeks in these arts the elements of amusement rather than

those of instruction or edification; and who, because he is clever and apt, and because it amuses him to do so, tries his hand at whatever happens to engage his fancy at the moment, and leaves it the richer for his impudent intrusion. His attitude is healthy and sane, devoid of all the morbid nervous excitements of exaltation, and of pretensions to profundity. Cocteau is thereby enabled to bring to whatever art he chooses to touch, a purely trivial grace, a clarity and disinterestedness of critical perception, and a calculated evasion of habitual precepts and practices which, when administered by an intelligence as precise and well balanced as his, cannot but prove an invigorating influence, and ultimately result in a contribution to that art more definitely beneficial than any except the finest serious work.

Cocteau is still popularly regarded in society as the paragon of *le dernier cri*, as the protagonist of all that is modern, as the sire and arch-priest of every new artistic movement that arises in Paris. Serious artists and the zealots of movements, shocked at his perpetual fluctuations, are inclined to view his excursions with suspicion; but that is because they do not understand the purely incidental weight of his contributions. The stage is so well set for him, by the diligence of his friends and detractors alike, that Cocteau is in a fair way of becoming a prodigy in his own lifetime. This superstition challenges scrutiny, for in its explanation lies the solution of whatever enigma there may be contained in the genius of Jean Cocteau. We have called Cocteau the playboy of Parisian art, a supremely gifted dilettante; and the definition is fundamentally exact. It happens that, at the same time, he possesses genius. The faculty of genius does not make

him any more a creative artist or any less a dilettante, for to pose before the world or before himself as a creative artist would require an attitude of mind and a continuity of purpose repugnant to the character of Jean Cocteau. He respects seriousness and pretensions to greatness in others, but for himself, it is more important to be amusing and to be amused than to be either serious or great. Thus, he toys with the arts in the manner of a god who creates an aimless universe to while away a dreary eon. Because he has genius, he does this sort of thing extremely well. Because most creative artists have only talent, persistence, and self-esteem, Cocteau's trifles stand out with a startling brilliance against the perpetual mediocrity created by his contemporaries. And because Cocteau is alive, restless, and filled with that quality of "curiosity and the desire of beauty" which Pater discerned at the roots of the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, he is actually found in the forefront of every battle and in the secret conspiracies of every new artistic movement. But always he stands a little apart, urging on the contestants to more intrepid assaults against the citadels of custom, but never quite proclaiming his own allegiances.

The truth of the matter is, that Cocteau is in the process of creating his own myth. He has perfected a gesture and raised an elaborate mask before the world. He is having a lark, and he is enjoying it enormously. It becomes apparent, when one subjects his performances to close scrutiny, that Cocteau has, in fact, no actual creative talent. He has never originated a movement, nor written or drawn a wholly original line. He is a superbly gifted virtuoso, who can improvise upon a snatch of melody and transmute it, with a few touches of his magic

bow, to a splendid concerto; but in the whole performance there will be no new note, but only the old notes magnificently repeated. He has, however, an extraordinary flair for discerning the trend of popular taste. Before a movement is more than a vague idea in the minds of a few men, Cocteau has identified himself with it, comprehended it, spaced its changes, and passed beyond it. He anticipates the rising of each new wind before the leaves are rustled on the far horizon. He knows whence each new movement arises and whither it tends better than its leaders, and knows to what fate it will come. And this second-sight he employs, not in the interests of personal ambition, but to extract whatever amusement there may be available in the situation before him at the moment. He does not become passionate or assertive. One feels that he does not believe in anything that is said; that his assent is merely a skeptical indulgence; and that he believes least of all in the eternal destiny of the most admirable representations he can find in the world about him, his own art and that of Picasso.

Thus, Cocteau has been able to distill into a single short book the whole essence of intelligent modernism. *Le Secret Professionnel* remains the sanest and most practical criticism of the trend of modern ideas that has yet been published. Cocteau allows for exceptions in this notation on the inscription page, under the caption of "Au Jugement Dernier":

J'INTERROGE: Et les catastrophes de chemin de fer, Seigneur? Comment m'expliquerez-vous les catastrophes de chemin de fer?

DIEU: (gêné): Ca ne s'explique pas. Ca se sent.

He speaks at length, in this book, of the problem of style. He compares artists to riflemen in a shooting gallery,

some bent upon scoring the bull's eye at all costs, others completely forgetting the target before them in their anxiety to impress the spectators by their graceful precision in poisoning their weapons for the shot. Cocteau watches the target, not the marksman. Let us have *style*, he says, instead of *a style*. Let us carry it next to our skin, rather than on our sleeve. Let us have good stuff in our coat, instead of smart tailoring.

It must be said, to the praise of Jean Cocteau, that the best demonstration of his artistic doctrine is to be found in his own work. He has published comparatively little—many books, but short ones—but, judged on the scale of excellence, he has published a great deal; and he is now, while still less than forty years of age, engaged in rewriting his works for a definitive edition. His bibliography is impressive, but all that we need consider are his poems, *Plain-Chant*; his curious collection of sketches, *Le Potomak*; his ballets, *Parade*, *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* and *Antigone*; his chichi critical writings, *Le Secret Professionnel*, *Picasso* and *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*; the collection of his drawings, *Dessins*, and his two novels, *Le Grand Ecart* and *Thomas l'Imposteur*.

Let us approach Cocteau anew, as if for the first time. Our first impression is one of surprise at the extraordinary versatility of the man. No one of his works suggests another, and none of them betrays its paternity. *Le Grand Ecart* is as far from *Thomas l'Imposteur* as Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale* is from Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme*. Here is a man who does not feel that it is necessary for him to embroider his past accomplishments. Having traversed one road, he closes it forever and breaks another. He does not repeat his successes;

he prefers to begin ever anew, and he finds the joy and profit of his art in fresh creations which have no traceable geneses. He stands, therefore, one step in advance of the artists who, resenting the intrusion of traditional criterions of excellence, endeavor to create a new art without dependence on the past. Cocteau begins a new career and a new past with every book. The next thing that strikes us is his inexhaustible cleverness. He has done more than create a literary style; he has created a new atmosphere of expression. Idea follows idea with a disconcerting swiftness; his prose is economical to the point of parsimony; each image is poised and considered, not in its capacity as illustration, but in the effect of its impact, as it advances his purpose. The composition is clean-cut, swift, dexterous, at every touch penetrating more deeply than anything that has been said on the subject before; and above this orderly massacre of ideas, we are aware of the directing genius of a mind alert and precise, unimpassioned and crystal-clear, consummately open to every new idea, but deceived by none of them, proceeding gracefully and adroitly straight to the heart of the argument.

Yet despite his brilliance—and Cocteau is one of the few modern writers to whom that overworked epithet may be justly applied—one does not need much perspicacity to discern how superficial is his talent. He is an artist in surfaces, never touching the depths, except in his occasional observations on esthetics. There is no spiritual presence beyond the precision of his ideas and the elegance of his style. One never is aware of the gross vigor of humanity in the rarified atmosphere of his intellectual peregrinations. This is a lack in his art, and

it produces yet another lack—a lack of mellowness and rounded maturity. Still, it is impossible to dispute Cocteau's preëminence among the younger writers of France, or his complete mastery of whatever craft with which he chooses for the moment to divert himself, whether it be serious or satirical ballets, plays, controversial journalism, music criticism, verse, trap-drumming, cabaret management, theater management, caricature, or fiction. The portfolio of his *Dessins* constitutes a detailed graphic criticism of artistic Paris and its denizens, as well as a reassembling of his poems and critical articles in another form. The book is presented, with a modest inscription, to Picasso, who insisted on its publication; but one perceives at once, in the quality of the drawing of this amateur, why so great an artist as Picasso should have deemed these "few strokes made on blotters, tablecloths, and on the backs of envelopes" worthy of collection in enduring form.

Cocteau is primarily a critic in all his works. His novels, his poems, his plays, his ballets, his drawings are, apart from their intrinsic merit, ingenious criticisms of ideas or people, manifestoes of esthetic, or patterns of what esthetic ought to be. For Cocteau, despite his popular acceptance as a prophet of modernism and his championship of radical movements, is, in his own work and in the quality of his ideas, a classicist. He derives, first of all, from Stendhal, Voltaire, and Molière, and less explicitly from Rimbaud and Mallarmé. He has, moreover, learned much from the painters and musicians whom, at one time or another, he has championed. In his work may be perceived the influence of Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie, and above all, Pablo Picasso. The famous sextette

of modernist musicians, whose apologist to the world he has been, have likewise given him back as much of inspiration as he has brought to them; and the Diaghilev and the Swedish ballets have further enriched the fluent canvas of his mind. The most sophisticated, the most intelligent, and one of the most authentically gifted figures in the French literary arena to-day, Cocteau has scorned nothing. He has taken whatever he could find of the pure metal from whatever source it has come to him; and, adding it to his own rich store, he has created of it a filigree in its own way a little finer than any that had existed before. What does it matter if the substance be thin? The simple function of fashioning it has amused its creator, and it remains none the less perfect and beautiful.

FRANZ WERFEL

SOMEWHERE in his critical writings, Heinrich Heine draws a fundamental distinction between the Nazarenes and the Hellenes of modern cultures. The shining virtue of a good metaphor is that its intrinsic truth becomes only the more unequivocal when it is taken literally. Therefore, when we quote Arthur Eloesser as saying: "Franz Werfel is the most thoroughgoing Nazarene of our literature. . . . We have no poet who has become so completely the prophet, and who was so clearly destined to be a prophet," we commit, by our ellipsis, a distinguished critic to somewhat more than he had intended to say, but we accurately describe Werfel's attitude before his own spirit and before his world.

Let us put aside the artistic differences of Heine's Nazarenes and Hellenes, and search rather the spiritual depths or shallows whence these differences arise. What Eloesser really says in the portion of his sentence which we have suppressed is merely that Werfel is "one who honestly cares not at all if his cloak of camel's hair becomes him or if he is sufficiently picturesque to suit the pleasure of the ladies." When the prophet has been true and his message clear and pure, his ragged cloak has been raiment of beauty elsewhere than in the theater of the Mir Isskustva. So with Franz Werfel, who chances, despite his early literary affiliations, to prefer the common speech and the old poetic forms and, whether by inspiration or by mere accident, to write sometimes like an

angel. His intense concentration upon the decisions of the spirit has left him little patience with artistic problems. His solitary aim is to plumb with a sure rod to the uttermost depths of his being, to strike aside the blinding scales of mortality, and to "kindle his undazzled eyes at the full midday beam." Artifices and minor allegiances have no portion of such high endeavor. Werfel addresses the spirit, out of the spirit, in impulsive language. His utterance is sober and earnest; at times, it is ecstatic. The path of the Hellenes is not for him. It is only in the way of the Nazarene that his spirit can walk upright and stride its full measure. The destination of his quest is too candid to be misunderstood.

The facts of Werfel's career are meager and simple. He was born at Prague on the 10th of September 1890, and educated in that city. His twentieth year was spent in advanced study at Hamburg, where he wrote his first book of poems, *Der Weltfreund*. In 1912 he served his term in the army, and entered the civil service. Throughout the war he was in active service on the Russian front. Sensitive to a painful degree and in disposition reserved to the point of frigidity, since 1918 he has lived in comparative retirement in Vienna. As a youth in Prague, he frequented literary society and came into intimate contact with such men as Max Brod, Gustave Meyrink, Leppin, and the great Czech poet Otakar Březina, whose verses he has translated in *Winde von Mittag bis Mitternacht*. Like Iwan Goll, Max Brod, and Albert Ehrenstein, Werfel is a Jew. Wide recognition of his talent came in 1913, with the publication of his second book of poems; and he is now generally acknowledged as the outstanding figure of the younger literary group.

Werfel came to his art singularly matured. The verses in *Der Weltfreund* are sure in technique and disclose the main currents of that intimate spiritual stream which his later works have only extended and rendered more profound. There is a suggestion of *Spiegelmensch* in his apparition as a child:

"Ach Gott, ich bin das nicht, der aus dem Spiegel stiert,
Der Mensch mit wildebewachsner Brust und unrasiert . . ."

and a sublime tenderness, very characteristic of the poet, in "Gottvater am Abend":

"Nun sind die Lichtlein vergangen,
Nun schlaft ihr auf Erden geschart.
Nun wein ich in meinen langen,
Langen weissen Bart."

From the first, Werfel constituted himself, in his capacity of artist, the mystical vicar of his world. He admonishes it as a wiser brother, with anxious love or with the wrath of bitter disappointment, or he commiserates its weaknesses and ills with diffident and helpful encouragement. But there are always two persons in his scene, two persons alone, who merge in his thought and become one: himself and his world. These two representational entities are so closely united that the effect is that of a dialogue between two egos. The individual does not exist for Werfel, whether that individual is himself or his neighbor, save as they both enfold the universe.

In his second volume of verses, *Wir Sind*, Werfel definitely emerges a prophet of spiritual renaissance. The extraordinary richness of this thin volume in essential poetry left no question of his success before the intel-

lectual public of Germany, which enthusiastically attended his public readings. The apprehension of tragedy, the tenderness for the humble and rejected, the tremendous aspiration toward the coming of good into the world, and the singular, half-mystical sentiment of personal responsibility for all of mankind's shortcomings disclosed in these poems represented, in the Germany of 1913, the emergence of a new spiritual voice which achieved in poetry the very karma toward which philosophy was reaching. The identity of the poet with his suffering figures, as with the neglected mother in such a characteristically sentimental piece as "Die Witwe am Bette ihres Sohnes," is subtle and profound:

"Und wie du aus mir gemündet,
In Himmel und Welt und Häuß,
Und wie du in mir dich entzündet,
So lösche ich in der aus.

"Mein Leben ist ein Sichergiessen
In dein gerundetes Licht,
Im leidenden Überfliessen
Erfüll ich die weltliche Pflicht.

"Bald bin ich nichts als dein Lachen,
Nichts als deines Mundes Gebot.
Lass mich deinen Schlaf bewachen,
Mein Kind, mein Dasein, mein Tod!"

And so likewise in the exquisite "Mondlied eines Mädchens," in Werfel's third book, *Einander*:

"All Ding in Zimmer verlassen,
Der Schuh, und der Tisch, und die Wand.
Ich möchte das Ferne anfassen,
Nur sein eine streichelnde Hand!

“Ich möchte mit Fröstelnden spielen,
Und halten die Kalten im Arm!
Ich fühle, die Reichen und Vielen
Sind Kinder vor mir und so arm!

“Für alle muss ich mich sorgen,
Mein Schlaf ist gläsern und schwebt . . .
Ich horche, wie in den Morgen
Der Atem von Allen sich hebt.

“Im Fenster wehn Bäume zerrissen,
Viel Himmel sind windig in Ruh.
Ich decke mit meinen Kissen
Die frierenden Welten zu.”

We have quoted thus at length from Werfel's poetry, because it is in the three books which we have observed, together with *Gesänge aus den Drei Reichen*, *Der Gerichtstag* and *Beschwörungen*, that his special message finds its original, most complete, and most natural expression. Werfel is not unique in this age in the purely lyrical quality of his utterance. The whole confession and protest of exhausted Europe is subjective. In the works of Franz Werfel, this subjectivity is enlarged to a mystical wholeness that seems to absorb objectivity itself and to be at once idealistic and terribly a part of the visible universe. Werfel's first novel, *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist Schuldig*, and all his plays, are immediately perceived to be fundamentally lyrical rather than dramatic in their quality, to develop and express subjectively variations of his original message. His recent plays, *Juarez und Maximilian* and *Paulus unter den Juden*, and his biographical novel of the opera, *Verdi*, prove that the author, after thirteen years of devotion to a single object, has learned to divert his gaze from its

straight inward focus; but the spiritual qualities of his three recent protagonists save even these productions for subjectivity and for Werfel's prophetic cause. The dramatic effect of Werfel's most recent works is heightened by the author's employment of familiar characters, yet one feels that the consequent historical necessities have interfered to a constraining degree in the free expression of a spiritual energy that is placed by its nature above the minor conformities of art.

"Jeremiah," continues Eloesser, "excused himself to the Almighty when he cried: 'O Lord, I am not fit to preach, for I am young.' Franz Werfel, quite to the contrary, would say: 'Lord, I am competent to preach, because I am young.' Nothing pleases him in the Europe of the past: neither its heroic history, nor its art and beauty, nor yet the glamour of its ancient culture. This modern Jeremiah can envisage nothing of this with his actual eyes. In his mind's eye he sees the land desolate, the cities in ruins, and the birds of the air all flown. The catastrophe of the war proved the rightness of his vision. But he deplores nothing that goes down in shipwreck. For him the only beauty is that of the inner life, of ethical obligations."

The whole of Werfel's attitude of life is contained in the poem (in *Wir Sind*) entitled "Ich bin ja noch ein Kind":

"Du aber, Herr, stiegst nieder, auch zu mir.
Und hast die tausendfache Qual gefunden,
Du hast in jedem Weib entbunden.
Und starbst im Kot, in jedem Stück Papier,
In jedem Zirkusseehund wurdest du geschunden,
Und Hure warst du manchem Kavalier!

"O Herr, zerreisse mich!

Was soll dies dumfe, klägliche Geniessen?

Ich bin nicht wert, dass deine Wunden fliessen.

Begnade mich mit Martern, Stich um Stich!

Ich will den Tod der ganzen Welt einschliessen.

O Herr, zerreisse mich!

"Bis dass ich erst in jedem Lumpen starb,

In jeder Kass und jedem Gaul verreckte,

Und ein Soldat in Wüstendurst verdarb,

Bis, grauser Sünder ich, das Sakrament weh auf der Zunge
schmeckte,

Bis ich den aufgefressnen Leib aus bitterm Bette streckte,

Nach der Gestalt, die ich verhöhnt umwarb!

"Und wenn ich erst zerstreut bin in den Wind,

In jedem Ding bestehend, ja im Rauche,

Dann lodre auf, Gott, aus dem Dornenstrauche!

(Ich bin dein Kind.)

Du auch, Wort, prassle auf, das ich in Ahnung brauche,

Giess unverzehrbar dich durchs All: Wir sind!!"

Here we have indeed the Nazarene and the prophet, the humble and pious convict of life who receives upon his own soul the guilt of the multitudes and, with ecstatic hands, presses the cruel thorns into his suffering flesh. But Werfel's exorcism is, in its nature, mystical rather than specific. His frequent quotations from Lao-tse and his general attitude of spirit suggest, if not a Buddhistic influence, at least a spiritual affiliation with the great Oriental mystics.

"Of all our prophets," says the invaluable Eloesser, "he is the most inexorable. Yet he is our seer of greatest talent, and possesses the temperament which perseveres above all others, and again and again draws new riches from itself." But Franz Werfel, introspective and tor-

tured as he is by every instinct and conviction of his being, is not concerned, as are other poets, with the ultimate destination of his own spirit or its immediate place in the universe. He is not even concerned, tender as he is, for the individual fate of his neighbors. His urgent anxiety is for humanity. It is in the cause of this woe-fully imperfect humanity, in peril of destruction, that he searches the secret places of his spirit; that he cherishes the unfortunate; that, like Dante, he inveighs against the indifferent and the laggard, and smites the sinful flesh with bitter rods. His craft appears to him a sacred charge. He, as a poet, is the visible symbol of the erring world and the iron tongue of God. He must bear upon his weary shoulders the burden of the world's shortcomings. He must be tragic and prophetic. He must strive to efface his ego in the stream of humanity, in order that his art might reach its highest utterance.

It was with this mission, these obligations, clearly before him that Franz Werfel turned to the theater. He came, not as a dramatist hoping to amuse or excite, but as a prophet whose word must be carried to larger audiences. His plays, one by one, have taken their place beside his poems in the single passionate outcry that is his entire work. First, the fairy romance in verse, *Die Mittagsgöttin*. Then, the magic trilogy in verse, *Spiegelmensch*, with its fascinating conception of man seeking perfection through the abnegation of his ego, a lying mirror which reflects only the image of his carnal nature when he scans it for the truth. The prose fantasy, *Spielhof*, with its half-poetical, half-dramatic quality, further annotates this period of transition.

As early as 1920, a certain hardening of Werfel's

style and a richening of the stream of his inspiration became apparent, in the apostolic fervor of the poems in *Der Gerichtstag*. *Die Mittagsgöttin* and even *Spiegel-mensch* are so exclusively poetic in quality and so tenuous in plot that any attempt to describe them, or to present them on the stage, except under the most favorable conditions, would end lugubriously. Despite the author's intention, these—certainly *Die Mittagsgöttin*—are plays more for the study than for the theater. But in *Bocksgesang*, Werfel exhibits an extraordinary mastery of all the devices of dramaturgy, and builds up his situation, impressive in itself and still more terrible in its implications, to a tenseness and stark power which even in the terms of the theater approach the sensational. An essential element of humanity, the element of symbolical Evil or Destruction, is typified in this lamentable monster, this "bio-anatomical-morphophysiological wonder," as the old rationalist physician calls it, which Stepan Milić, too proud to admit that he is the father of such a son, keeps hidden for twenty-three years in a hut on his farm. "The world of men, my friend," says the physician to the father, "no less than that of Nature, has, I regret to say, its inscrutable seasons, eclipses, northern lights, and magnetic storms, its convulsions of the established order. Original chaos surges to the surface and the hidden animal takes possession of us." But this hidden shame is no ordinary reversion. Even the physician who assisted at its birth is disconcerted at the sight of it after so many years. "The ancients," he says, "believed that, at high noon, a thing could spring from quivering Nature, formless but visible, horrible and full of majesty, blasting all that cross it, like the vision of the Whole compressed into

a second. Believe me or not, I saw something like that just now!"

And when the terrified doctor flees, leaving the door of the prison open, and the monster escapes into the strange world which has not surmised his presence, terror descends upon this little eighteenth-century "Slavic countryside beyond the Danube." Juvan, the solitary, misanthropic student-tramp, son of a prostitute and a hater of the world, sees the beast and is filled with mysterious exaltation. He leads the vagrants in a desperate insurrection. The beast is chained in the Holy of Holies of a despoiled Greek Orthodox church, and the vagrants speak of him in the idiom of Greco-Assyrian Pan worship. Juvan is his prophet and ragged old Bogobuj, with his name like that of the Evil One, his priest. The beast is the god whose name may not be spoken. Juvan challenges the deposed Greek Orthodox pope:

JUVAN: Did you see him?

POPE: See! Him! The monster! Did I dare look at him! He laughs at his bonds, the shaggy one!

JUVAN: And do you know who he is?

POPE: Do not name him! Do not name him! You . . . you . . . Let me go!

JUVAN: So you do not doubt? You believe him to be what he is?

POPE: I believe in the death of the world. Leave me!

JUVAN (*taking him by the throat*): If you believe, then speak his name!

POPE (*groaning*): Revolution, murder, arson, and heresy! Those are his names.

JUVAN (*releasing him*): Go!

The countryside is laid waste before the Janissaries come to rout the vagrants. Stepan Milić and his old wife are

reduced to solitude and poverty. Mirko, Stepan's sound son and his pride, falls beneath the pikes of the vagrants. The beast, which has been Stepan's shame, plunges into the burning forest and is consumed. But, their riches lost, their disgrace known to the world, their pride destroyed, the old couple find themselves free and happy for the first time.

Stanja, Mirko's betrothed, had not loved Mirko. She had loved the student, who must pay with his life for his leadership of the uprising. But their love may not be consummated, even in death:

STANJA: Then tell me, mouth that is still alive, why, if we were made for each other, it is not to be?

JUVAN: All comes and passes lightly with the frivolous. But what can we do against our souls, those inexorable sisters? Unceasingly they strew darkness upon our days; and this is their pride, that they make life harsh in our hearts.

STANJA: Why . . . why!

JUVAN: Because all that is Eternal fears fulfillment.

Yet Stanja elects to remain with Stepan Milić and his old wife. Life had entered her when she had gone into the Holy of Holies, a voluntary immolation to the beast. Life had been consummated in her in the beast's cry of unearthly joy. "You did not love my son," says Mirko's mother, ". . . the marriage was not consummated." "My place is with you," replies the girl who had known the beast; "I belong to your son . . . I bear his child. . . ." Humanity has been cleansed as by fire. It has been reduced to the elemental; its brutal and passionate energies have been released and given free rein until they have exhausted themselves, so that the spark of divinity, which remains concealed in every man until such a crisis, might

manifest itself. Pride and shame have both been taken away, and only simplicity and tenderness remain. Life has renewed itself in carnage.

It is in *Schweiger* that Franz Werfel, as dramatist and prophet, achieves his noblest and most satisfying utterance. The tragic figure of the watchmaker, who bears within him a spiritual element so strong that it disturbs the séances of the local spiritualists, carries the full impressiveness of that divine flame which Werfel believes to burn amid the sordidness of every human heart. When the watchmaker stands for office as a Social Democrat, his popularity piques the ardently Royalist fears of Professor Doctor Burghardt von Viereck to a contemptible revelation. Ten years before, a schoolmaster, one Franz Forster, in a fit of temporary dementia, had fired several shots into a group of children, killing a ten-year-old boy. The criminal had been committed to Doctor von Viereck's sanatorium, and by hypnosis the latter had deprived him of all recollection of the past that the world had already forgotten. Franz Forster awoke as Franz Schweiger, and for a decade, in another town, he has lived a useful and exemplary life. But Anna, his adored wife, when she knows the truth, can think of nothing but his deed and of their unborn child. So she leaves him. Then, when he has redeemed the life he had taken by his heroic rescue of a company of children from a burning excursion boat, she returns in time to save him from a repetition of the tragedy, but too late to prevent him from destroying himself.

Here we have tragedy—the bitterest kind of tragedy: unnecessary tragedy, the tragedy of waste. But we feel that all is not ended with the “*Quidquid deliquisti*” of the

priest. "He is no more," says Father Rotter. "He is—" begins Frau Strohschneider, the spiritualist; and then she becomes silent. "What were you about to say?" "Nothing," she replies, and "der Vorhung fällt." The spark of divinity that was the real Franz Schweiger could not be quenched by death; even now, it is abroad somewhere in the world. Thus, despite the purely theatrical effectiveness of *Schweiger*, it is the lyrical quality of the play that is in fact more powerfully felt than the dramatic situation. In this respect, as well as in their adroitly dissembled moralistic hypotheses, the plays of Franz Werfel—despite the theatrical effectiveness which all of them possess apart from such preoccupations—may be said to resemble the medieval Christian miracle plays. *Schweiger* is more vigorously dramatic than even *Bocksgesang*, for here the whole drama is built upon an acceptably realistic situation; the characterization is strong and true, and the psychological treatment is independent and convincing. But just before the dénouement of the last act, the moral which one has felt to underlie the entire play is suddenly disclosed:

FATHER ROTTER: In the endless night, to light a torch is a good deed; to extinguish one is a still greater deed!

SCHWEIGER: Yes! It is true. Deep, deep within me, I feel it. It was not sickness, not insanity; it was . . .

FATHER ROTTER: It was Evil! Not the deliberate, purposeful evil that is an obvious gratification of the ego. No; the unfathomable, the absolute Evil. We shall call it by its true name: the Evil!

SCHWEIGER: Such thoughts have often come to me in my sleeping hours.

FATHER ROTTER: The Evil, against which I make the sign of the Cross a thousand times during the day. I feel it pro-

foundly. Is it not present in a million moments in human beings, at work even now? When a lad tears a spider limb from limb; when the flunky at the Inn kicks the hunchback off the door-step; when a mother places her infant on the heated fireplace! Ah—there is no end to this casuistry! And all the difference lies only in their attitudes. Evil is more apparent than Good. Because Jesus needed the Eucharist to unite him with mankind. He, however, possesses the power to be at one with us at all times and at all places. He was identified with you on that day when you fired those shots, and he was identified with me when I . . . But why speak of myself?

SCHWEIGER: Do you feel it?

FATHER ROTTER: I smell it—and that is really not merely a figure of speech. Physically, I smell the hidden fire that permeates our epoch. A terrific force hangs over us all! I do not wish to speak of the abominations and dissoluteness of our times. But in all the disclosures of human activity to-day, in art, in science, in all our enterprises, is it not always Evil, that senseless, unsubstantial Evil, the will to wound, that is apparent at every exhibition of art, in our derisive literature, yes, even in all our physical theories! Not a loving God, whose image must be an admonition in all endeavor!

SCHWEIGER: Why, oh, why is all this?

FATHER ROTTER: That is the glory; that is our answer to all this: Evil is a means to Grace. The darker, the more insensate Evil is, the greater must be the disposition for Grace in man. And precisely because our epoch is so satanic, it has been divinely appointed. I am happy to be alive in these times!

One feels, similarly, in the remote luminance of Juárez, the spiritual weight of *Juarez und Maximilian*, which is otherwise nothing more than a first-rate historical drama, probably inspired by the publication of Egon Corti's *Maximilian und Charlotte von Mexiko*. One feels the same exaltation in the romantic drama *Besuch aus dem Elysium* and in the dialogue *Die Versuchung*.

One feels it in its unique quality so strongly in Werfel's translation of *Troerinnen* that Euripides is submerged; and again even in his journalistic work, such as the profoundly stirring article on Cabrinovich, the Serbian assassin of the Austrian Archduke, which Werfel contributed to *Die Neue Rundschau* in 1923.

The truth is, that Franz Werfel is an ecstatic, incessantly driven, in every line he writes, to communicate his vision of the eventual perfectibility of the universe and his disgust of its present shortcomings. He is a pure spirit. He chances to be, as well, a literary artist of the first merit. And the combination of this apostolic ardor, this loftiness of spirit, and this literary distinction, has brought Franz Werfel very close to a consummation accurately describable only in a word which thoughtful critics are chary of employing. That is the consummation of greatness. Moral greatness, he has certainly already achieved. Again and again, he has approached artistic greatness. A few years more, and we shall know the destiny of this still youthful poet, who, of all his generation in Germany, appears to have the surest chance of reaching that desideratum of remembrance which the optimistic term immortality.

BENEDETTO CROCE

THERE will always be a diversity of opinion concerning the extent and quality of Croce's influence on the intellectual development of the New Italy. That this influence is, or at least, at one time was, widespread and fundamental, is hardly to be doubted, despite the quips of such clever young iconoclasts as Soffici: "Un maestro nefasto per tutti quelli che l'hanno seguito: per l'Italia—se la gioventù lo seguisse." Gentile and Piccoli, Croce's most ardent admirers, ascribe to the popularization of his philosophy the most valuable accomplishments of the modern Italian mind and spirit. Prezzolini is more sober in both his estimate and his praise, but he obviously regards the philosopher with much the same respect that he would accord to a national monument. Even Papini, in the ungracious and ill-informed denunciation of Croce in his *Stroncatore*, justifies his malice on the grounds of the immense influence exercised by the ideas of his unfortunate subject, which, to his mind, makes the demolition of their author somewhat in the nature of a public duty.

It is true that Croce made his first appearance as a philosopher at the time and under the circumstances best calculated to promote his popularity. The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of many new ideals in southern and Central Italy. The State was becoming conscious of its renewed might. The young intellectuals were charged with modernism and filled with the patriotic

ambition to create for Italy a new art, which should contain all the novel and subtle truths which they had learned to admire in their European peregrinations. Croce was emphatically one of their own, so he had their confidence from the first. His traditions were of the purest Orthodox and Neapolitan flavor; his father had been a substantial citizen of the old order, his grandfather a high magistrate, and his mother was the sister of Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa, the one a philosopher, the other a statesman, and both modern in their thought and high in the esteem of the Italian youth. As a young man, Croce had distinguished himself by his critical articles in the then exceedingly advanced *Fanfulla della Domenica*; and when, at the age of seventeen, after the death of his parents in the earthquake of Casamicciola, in 1883, he removed to the house of Silvio Spaventa, in Rome, he became a marked figure at the University. There he came under the influence of Antonio Labriola, who was at that time delivering his celebrated lectures on moral philosophy, in elaboration of Herbart's ethics—an experience which deeply stirred his intensely pious and ethically conscious mind, “restoring the majesty of the ideal, of *that which has to be* as opposed to *that which is*, and mysterious in its opposition; but because of this same mysteriousness, absolute and uncompromising.” The beginnings of Croce's independent philosophic thought can be traced to this early impetus.

When, however, Benedetto Croce returned to Naples after his three years' sojourn in Rome, he continued to pursue his literary studies, and devoted himself to the exhaustive researches in the early history of his native city of which the best results are *I Teatri di Napoli dal*

Rinascimento alla fine del Secolo Decimottavo, La Rivoluzione Napoletana del 1799, and the fascinating *Storie e Leggende Napoletane*. Having inherited a fortune sufficient to secure his independence against the limitations of a professorship and for the free prosecution of his plans, his life previous to 1900 was an inconspicuous, but steady progression toward his goal. He read incessantly, occasionally publishing a literary essay or some document of historical interest, and meanwhile extending his culture by European travel. He virtually rediscovered those great but still neglected Neapolitans to whom both Italy and Croce owe so much, Francesco de Sanctis in literary criticism, Giambattista Vico in philosophy. He undertook a minute study of history and economics.

It is precisely to these scholarly discursions, which on the surface have nothing to do with philosophy, that Croce's interest as a philosopher is chiefly due. If it has brought him to the very duality which he deploras as opposing the "concetto puro," if it has made him a philosopher who is continually disturbing and contradicting his own system, and a literary critic committed to strangely uncritical perversities, it has, at least, given his ideas breadth and suggestiveness. Any synthesis, however imperfect, is better than undigested fact, and any progress toward the formation of ideals for the new age is better than no progress at all. Let us grant at once that the philosophy of Benedetto Croce is insufficient. Let us grant that it does not satisfy the maturely discriminating reason; that its system is full of defects, its esthetic a criterion without a model, its logic full of contradictions, its ethic simply bourgeois. Let us grant

that his literary criticism reveals him on every page to be a scholarly traditionalist, insensible to any beauty which is not historically approved, and utterly devoid of any intuitive perception, any creative appreciation of his own, and intent only upon documenting his theory of esthetic by his literary studies. In granting so much, we should be wrong; but even then, much would be left. Soffici writes, in his *Giornale di Bordo*:

"The equation of Benedetto Croce:—Criticism equals History; History equals Philosophy; Philosophy equals Spirit; Spirit equals Everything; Everything equals Nothing; Nothing equals Benedetto Croce.

"But no. It is fated that Croce's system shall not correspond with any reality. Here is a rigorous demonstration according to his method, but an erroneous one. The result: Croce equals Nothing, is inexact. There remains, as a residue, the cultivated, active, spirited man; personally, a most agreeable man."

There remains also the Philosophy of the Spirit, and all that its disciples and elaborators may yet make of it.

Historically and intellectually, the stage was set for a new artistic creed when Croce read his first philosophical manifesto before the Accademia Pontaniana, at Naples, in the March of 1893. On the one hand, Italy was in a condition of semi-exhaustion and in sore need of an emphatic spiritual voice. Italian art had become sluggish and imitative, and before a new art could be formed, certain definitions had to be arrived at and established. On the other hand, the youth of Italy felt within themselves the stirring of a new spirit, which the pseudo-German philosophy then in vogue, and the Positivism of Lombroso and his school, did not suffice to satisfy. Enter, heroically, to fill the breach, Benedetto Croce, Neapolitan, with an

apparently concrete definition of art as "an *activity* aiming at the production of the beautiful," and an absorbing and suggestive philosophy, distinctly Italian in its character and in its antecedents, since it was derived as much from Vico and Francesco de Sanctis, the Neapolitans, as from Hegel, the German. In the four volumes of the *Filosofia dello Spirito* and in the twenty-eight other volumes which he has produced in elaboration and documentation of his theories—for the whole Croce's literary criticism and miscellaneous literary works are exactly to this purpose—he has developed a philosophy which is primarily the philosophy of a cultured humanitarian, anxious for art although himself not an artist, solicitous for freedom although himself an habitual conformist, ambitious for purity in all the manifestations of the human spirit, and filled with an acute sense of moral responsibility. It is a philosophy legitimately derived, not from Hegel, Baumgarten, Kant, or Vico, but equally from all the manifold elements which had entered into the philosopher's culture and preparation. Croce writes:

"I am, and I believe one has to be, Hegelian; but in the same sense in which any man to-day who has a philosophical mind and culture is and feels himself to be, at the same time, Eleatic, Heraklitian, Sokratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Skeptic, Neoplatonic, Christian, Buddhist, Cartesian, Spinozian, Leibnitzian, Vichian, Kantian, and so on. That is, in the sense that no thinker, and no historical movement of thought, can have passed without fruit, without leaving behind an element of truth which is an either conscious or unconscious part of living and modern thought. A Hegelian, in the meaning of a servile and bigoted follower, professing to accept every word of the master, or of a religious sectarian who considers dissension a sin, no sane person wants to be, and no more I.

Hegel has discovered, as others have done, one phase of truth; and this phase one has to recognize and defend: that is all. If this shall not take place now, it matters little. 'The Idea is not in haste,' as Hegel was wont to say. To the same content of truth we shall come, some day, by a different road, and, if we shall not have availed ourselves of his direct help, in looking back on the history of thought, we shall have to proclaim him, with many an expression of wonder, a fore-runner."

By this same token, when all the objectors shall have had their way, it may yet be found that Benedetto Croce is the forerunner of many truths. Time will eliminate, as he apparently is not able to do, the redundancies of his prodigious system; time will reconcile its contradictions, and temper its acerbities. It is perhaps not too audacious to suggest that Croce's philosophy is not so valuable for what it is as for what it may become. Whatever it has not accomplished, it has suggested certain syntheses and associations, and proposed certain definitions, which must be regarded as of great importance. In the still somewhat reprobate "philosophy" of esthetics, Croce has—and so far as philosophy is concerned, he has done so with a measure of success—affirmed the theory of Expressionism, with greater elaboration and emphasis than any of his predecessors. The theory that beauty exists in its specific expression is not in itself novel; but the value of Croce's definition lies in its freedom from the intellectual difficulties which involve other attempts to define the beautiful, and in its implication of a new viewpoint from which a new order of knowledge and a new meaning of life and mind may be developed. Croce's theory leaves much to the individual, which is not a small part of its merit as

an incentive to growth through appreciation and knowledge:

"An object is either beautiful or ugly, according to the category through which we perceive it. Art is a category of apperception, and in art, the whole of natural and human reality—which is either beautiful or ugly, according to its various aspects—becomes beautiful because it is perceived as reality in general, which we want to see fully expressed. Every character or action or object, entering into the world of art, loses, artistically speaking, the qualifications it has in real life, and is judged only inasmuch as art represents it with more or less perfection. Caliban is a monster in reality, but no longer a monster as an artistic creation."

There is, moreover, a certain lyrical human recognition in Croce's doctrine of the intuitive activity of creation, which takes into account the dynamics of what the old poets used to call their "phrenzy" and the particular rhythm of each creative passion which produces every separate work of art. One could multiply such generalizations indefinitely, for it is the unique virtue of Croce's theory of esthetic that, although one will not accept any feature of it in its entirety as Croce has defined it, one finds oneself stirred to independent speculation far beyond the limits of academical esthetics by each of the new suggestions and associations which abound in such profusion in his discourse.

The other phases of Croce's *Filosofia dello Spirito* have less originality. He recognizes in the whole theoretical activity of the mind but two elementary forms, the intuition and the concept—two moments in the unity of a single process, which become, as in Kant, a logical synthesis *a priori*. The concept he considers separately in its definition and in its individual judgment. He

enumerates four concepts: the beautiful, the true, the useful, and the good; each distinct and concrete, but each indispensable. Hence, in his elaboration, the Esthetic, the Logical, the Practical (with its subdivisions of Economic and Ethic), and the Realistic, or Historical. Croce's pre-tension is not so much to having presented a final system of philosophy—which he certainly has not done—as to having made a valuable contribution to the deliverance of philosophy from the reproach of a dualistic hypothesis. He writes:

"In the philosophy which I have sketched, Reality is affirmed as Mind, not a mind which stands above the world or runs through the world, but a mind which coincides with the world. Nature is shown to be a moment and product of mind itself. Dualism, therefore (at least, that form of dualism which has tormented thought from Thales to Herbert Spencer), is surmounted, and surmounted with it is transcendence, whether of a materialistic or of a theological principle. Mind, which is the World, is the mind which is evolving, and therefore it is both one and diverse at the same time, an eternal solution and an eternal problem. The self-consciousness of this mind is the philosophy which is its history, or its history which is its philosophy, both substantially one and identical. And the consciousness is identical with the self-consciousness; that is, they are distinct and yet one, like life and thought."

Croce's contribution to modern thought is, then, that of an insatiable and eclectic seeker, an expounder, a resolver, a clarifier, rather than that of an originator. He has sought, in all the functions of life, the answer to Pilate's ironic question: "Quid est veritas?". In his search for the pure truth, he has comprehended all knowledge and achievement, and has weighed the true value of everything, even that of error. He has found, as Piccoli says,

“that true objectivity belongs only to the truth we discover within ourselves, when the eye of our mind is not turned on the transient spectacle of our superficial life, but is reaching under it for that universal consciousness which is the foundation of the individual one.” This tireless and inexorable quest of the absolute of truth is the whole of his philosophy. He has not found it, nor shall we discover it through him; but every idea which may set us a little farther on the road, even though it be accompanied by a dozen absurdities, is in itself a contribution of incalculable value.

THOMAS MANN

IT is difficult to say of any single writer, however great his genius, that he envisages the whole spirit of his generation. If we can say it of Homer and Shakespeare, it is because their genius was synthetical and adaptive and the spirit of their times simple, rather than because their minds were great enough to encompass their universe. And to-day, even less than then, no man is big enough, or argonaut enough, or even sufficiently human, to put aside the complexities and the hundred differences of the modern world and enfold within his hospitable understanding the motives and the aspirations of his entire generation. He does excellently if he can stand as representative of his particular segment of society; and if he is perfectly and soundly and consistently honest about himself, he does all that can reasonably be expected of him. Thus, it is not diminishing the importance of either to contradict the hyperbole of certain admirers of Thomas and Heinrich Mann, who claim for each of these dissimilar brothers the vicarship of his generation. Each accurately represents an important current in the spirit of that generation, and in a different sense, each represents himself. Each does so with art, humanity, and intelligence. That is enough. •

It is said that Thomas Mann prefers to think of himself as a good bourgeois drifted by chance into literature, rather than as an artist. It is well known that his appearance carries out this impression. Ludwig Lewisohn, who

was present in Vienna at the celebration of Mann's fiftieth birthday, writes: "He lectured on Goethe and Tolstoy; he spoke at the dinner of the P. E. N. club on the mystery of form; he bore out in all his words and his bearing the characterization with which Raoul Auernheimer greeted him, that of the 'most responsible' of living artists. He has not the ruddy glow of Wassermann, smoldering so often with that 'last infirmity of noble minds,' nor the restless mobility of Schnitzler, nor the careful reserve, as careful as his frock-coat, of Galsworthy. He is not much moved by fame nor afraid of age and death, and has long sunk the patrician in the man. He might easily be mistaken for a North German or American man of business, of a quiet and refined type, with his narrow, dark head with hair conventionally parted on the left, clipped but not too close-clipped black mustache. Yet in his simple appearance and demeanor there is never a moment's stressing of the note of simplicity. He is neither eager for praise nor impatient of it, nor unkindly toward the adulation of fools; but thoughtful, measured, calm, smoking his cigar, exchanging the necessary commonplaces of the dinner-table without eagerness but without condescension. A supremely kind and earnest man, utterly untempted to make either kindness or earnestness or stylistic stringency the 'notes' of his personality. A man 'all wool,' as incapable of handing out shoddy in the high matters of his trade as his merchant ancestors of Lübeck were of measuring with false measures."

In *Buddenbrooks*, Mann has written the epic of the race of merchant princes of the Hanseatic city, of whom he, with his brother, is the last inheritor. *Buddenbrooks*

appeared in 1902, when the author was twenty-seven years old. The critics required a brief period of pious meditation before recognizing its merit, but it at once took the place in the public's esteem which it continues to hold. For this great study of the degeneration of an old bourgeois stock is drawn from the very figment of German social life of the mid-nineteenth century. It is accurate and comprehensive, and its historical value is unique. And beyond this meticulousness of detail, this recognizable scrupulousness of the whole picture, is the activity of a firm, mellow, slightly ironical, resolutely truthful literary talent of the first order.

The decline of the Buddenbrooks extends over four generations. The house had been founded in 1768. Good burghers of Lübeck, devout, simple, and industrious, they had feared God and attended to the patrimonial grain business, until by 1835, when the story opens, it is a flourishing institution and the Buddenbrooks important and respected personages in the city. But their progress has been exclusively materialistic. Nothing has been left for the spirit. The second generation is better educated and more carefully bred than the first, as punctual in its duty to God, a little more anxious to show a good front to the world, and a little more grasping. We meet them all at old Johann's housewarming party in Meng Street—the old folk, the children, the grandchildren, and the relatives, their friends and dependants. The broad canvas is bewilderingly crowded, for it contains a whole segment of a well established society, with all its appurtenances of furniture, clothing, and conversation; but each of these multitudinous characters is sharply discriminated

and assigned to his just place in the procession of the Buddenbrooks on their slow march to destruction.

Buddenbrooks are born; they marry, beget other Buddenbrooks, and die; and the lives of all center about the old house in Meng Street and the family grain business. They represent the imperturbable phalanx of conservatism in local business, religion, society, and politics. But the third generation breaks a little out of the line. Antonie is frivolous and willful, and she comes to no good. Her brother Christian chafes under the restraint of a too stringent ideal. Only Thomas is left to maintain the tradition which is smothering all its inheritors because it will brook no compromise with the imagination or with the free agency of the will. But Johann, the son of Thomas, is too sensitive for the struggle. He is rather the child of his thwarted mother, and all her crushed artistic instinct emerges in him, in his passion for music, his devotion to dreams, and his utter incapacity for business. So Thomas, now a Senator, sees that symbol of his family's greatness, the old house in Meng Street, sold, without knowing how to avert the calamity; and the power of the Buddenbrooks is extinguished with his death and the death of his pathetic little son.

One of the characteristics which Thomas Mann shares with the great novelists is his exceptional capacity for an emotional understanding of dissimilar characters. Despite the objectivity of his narrative, his subtle mastery of style, and the precise impartiality of his point of view, the simple element of humanity is so warm within his consciousness that he achieves the rare miracle of rendering scrupulous psychology as a living instrument. This is the priceless virtue of Mann's masterpiece, that

extraordinary, singularly beautiful study of emotional dualism, *Der Tod in Venedig*; of that most pathetic of love tales, *Tristan*; of that imaginative grasping after peace of the spirit, *Tonio Kröger*; of that most delicately perceptive comparison in literature of the artistic with the ecstatic ideal, the drama of Lorenzo de' Medici and Fra Giorlamo Savonarola, *Fiorenza*. It is this which distinguishes, in his first collection of short stories, the tragedy of *Der Kleine Herr Friedemann*, who, after he has accepted the separation from life which his deformity compels, learns to desire life again through the impact of an unworthy love and cannot endure his disappointment; the insufferable boredom of the globe-trotter in *Enttäuschung*; the tortured anfractuosities of the unhappy protagonist of *Der Bajazzo*, whose practical and artistic natures are both so strong that his whole existence is wrecked by discontent and all of his enterprises foredoomed to failure. It is the sole compensation of *Königliche Hoheit*, lending a depth, poignancy, and significance to the figures of Klaus Heinrich and Imma Spoelmann, which even the extravagant romanticism of the story which the mingling of their destinies produces cannot quite diminish. Nor is it in less measure the outstanding excellence of *Der Zauberberg*, in which, after a long interval of pamphleteering, Thomas Mann resumes his dignities as a novelist in the classic tradition.

Mann's excursions into politics and sociology, during and after the war, gave some basis for the fear that his new preoccupations would leave him insufficient energy for creative writing, other than the short stories which he continued to publish at infrequent intervals. His attitudes in the general anarchy which followed the war were, how-

ever, sedative and constructive; and, in view of the confidence and high repute which Mann enjoys in Germany, his adherence to sanity, Republican Conservatism, and a sensible internationalism doubtless produced a compensating result. His defense of German Nationalism in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, and his sociological generalizations in *Rede und Antwort*, prove how much closer to a solution of great national problems simple common-sense and love can sometimes come than the soundest political theory.

Der Zauberberg is, in Mann's own phrase, "a dialectic novel"; and in the interminable discussions which occupy the larger portion of the book, most of the ideas which the author had advanced in his articles and interviews during the seven years in which the novel was in the process of composition are resumed, disputed, and dismissed. The first impression is, therefore, one of dullness; but on second reading, this impression of monotony gives place to one of melancholy beauty. One observes the slow exposition of character through these fugitive nuances of thought, the gradual shading in of events in these debates which had, at first, appeared merely to retard the action. *Der Zauberberg* is as different in every way from *Buddenbrooks* as the epochs, so close yet so remote, which they respectively represent. It will never be loved as *Buddenbrooks* is loved, but it is filled with a spiritual beauty at times as positive even as that of *Der Tod in Venedig*.

As *Buddenbrooks* is a representation of the family, *Der Zauberberg* is a representation of contemporary society, as observed in the closeness of its diseased soul. In a sanatorium on Davos, an international motley of con-

sumptives are gathered. High on the "magic mountain," overarched by the wide skies and bound in by glaciers, reality has ceased to exist for these exiles, and all perceptions of time and space are enlarged to the scale of eternity. A young engineer from Hamburg, Hans Castorp, who has a spot on one lung and a cousin at the retreat, comes up for a three weeks' stay and remains seven years. The two cousins discuss the problems of life and philosophy, until Joachim, desperately longing for action, against all advice returns to the "lower realities" and comes back to the Zauberberg only to die. An Italian Liberal, a Jew turned Jesuit but remaining mystical and absolutist, the psychoanalyst Krokowski, that honest physician Behrens, the satisfied and earthy Peeperkorn, and others, bring various points of view to the discussions that end nowhere. They discuss everything in earth and heaven, and, since it is their only occupation, they do so superlatively well.

It requires an expert master of ceremonies to enliven such conversations over twelve hundred pages, and in this, Mann does not always succeed. One feels that one might have done with much less. But the deeper significance of these subjects—the crises and attitudes implicit in them, the delicate psychological differences which they expose, the Olympian arrogance and detachment of these talkers upon Davos in discussing the problems of the remote world below—render them all precious. And finally, the slightly exalted, introspective, distinctly North German love of Hans Castorp for the morbidly seductive Russian, Claudia Chauchat, is *Der Tod in Venedig* over again, without the inversion. These elements, the impact of the war, and a variety of individual

characterizations symbolizing the chief types of European civilization before the war, combine to complete, upon a vaster scale, the picture of society which Thomas Mann began in *Buddenbrooks* a quarter of a century ago, and to which every book he has since published has been a contribution.

Thomas Mann's life has been simple. We have surmised some part of it in *Buddenbrooks*, in the characters of the Senator Thomas, his wife Gerda, and their little son Johann. His own ancestors, as appears in Arthur Eloesser's admirable study, *Thomas Mann: sein Leben und sein Werk*, were such solid merchants of Lübeck as the Buddenbrooks. His father was a Senator of the Free City; his mother, a Brazilian woman with decided artistic tendencies. Thomas Mann began writing early, and his first short story, *Gefallen*, won the praise of Richard Dehmel. Upon the removal of the family to Munich, he became an editor of *Simplicissimus*, but the success of *Buddenbrooks* liberated him for the career which he has since followed with such unostentatious zeal. He at present resides in a quiet villa in the suburbs of Munich.

MAURICE DONNAY

PLEASANT as it is to encounter so amiable a talent as Maurice Donnay's, whether in the French Academy or out of it, it is a noteworthy portent that *Sous le Sourire d'Elisabeth* is the only one of that worthy's numerous books in which his witty immortality is publicly exhibited in its pale green coat. Although Donnay has been a member of the Academy since 1907, when he succeeded to the seat of the historian Albert Sorel, one has heretofore had only the three-word proclamation on the title-pages of his books whereby to guess his high appointment. One has, indeed, found him in strange places for an Academician—at first, in the Chat Noir; then, in the popular theater and the lighter periodicals, in the Paris clubs and boulevards. And one has always been delighted at finding him, for he is the wittiest, the most diverting, the most elegant of writers. But these are not the graces that one would expect to commend one to a seat in the guarded precincts of the Palais Mazarin.

It is strange to find, among this sober company, a methodically successful popular playwright, a celebrated raconteur, an amusing feuilletonist, and an adapter of *Dialogues des Courtisanes* from the Greek of Lucian of Samosata. Donnay, with his light productions of and for the moment, seems rather to belong to the boulevards. But it is for exactly this reason that he belongs as well in the French Academy. It was a pure stroke of genius which caused that famous body to welcome a talent so

thoroughly and so typically French. For, if Donnay's work is entirely made up of popular plays and journalistic ephemera, in every line of his feuilletons, as in every situation and phrase of dialogue in his plays, a purely Parisian life, mind, and spirit are disclosed. A Maurice Donnay could no more have been produced outside of Paris than an Arthur Schnitzler out of Vienna, or a Jacinto Benavente out of Madrid. Even if it possessed no other excellence, this singularity would be enough to distinguish his talent.

But Donnay is, as well, a dramatist of substantial merit. As a master of stage technique, he is surpassed in contemporary France only by Sasha Guitry: as a dexterous manipulator of undertones and diverting implications, one must go to Arthur Schnitzler to find his peer. His dialogue is swift, brilliant, and extremely telling. His treatment of life is never deep, nor is his psychology searching; but within the limits of these surfaces which he prefers to the more perilous depths, his conceptions are both living and true. Donnay is a deliberately popular writer, in the sense that he seeks the crest of the popular wave and gives the public what it wants, in the way in which it desires to have this presented. But he has managed, by his extraordinary mastery of his vehicle, to achieve an exquisite compromise between art and popularity; and by his knowledge of life and his fine, mellow sympathy with human nature in all its frailties, and by the essential morality of his point of view—the morality of a right-minded man of the world, healthy, reasonable, and unpolluted by cant—to lend his plays a peculiar dignity, far beyond their slight and sometimes pitiful themes.

Like Georges de Porto-Riche and Henry Bataille, Donnay has chosen modern love as the subject of all his plays. But he is neither the passionate lyricist of love, like Porto-Riche, nor its pathologist, like Bataille. He is simply an observer of his favorite spectacle, tolerant, slightly ironic, very worldly-wise, and, above all, honest. His chief interest is in a sort of behavioristic notation of various types of "emancipated" characters, in their reactions to love under changing conditions. In these characters alone he is distinct and original; in all the theatrical trappings with which he surrounds them, he shows his creative faculty to be shallow and conventional, and all too readily adapted to the prevailing taste of the moment. A thoroughgoing homme de théâtre, he is a raconteur and an embellisher of surfaces, and he must be judged as such. It would be fatal to take him into the library, unless one can do so and, at the same time, imagine him as on the stage.

Donnay is pure Parisian. He was born at Paris in 1854, of a well-to-do middle-class family, and educated at the Ecole Centrale. Intended for the profession of a civil engineer, he entered a contractor's office, where he remained for six years. But, meanwhile, he was leading a double life at the Chat Noir, then under the cheerful egis of the painter-restaurateur, Rudolphe Salis. There he recited the verses and produced the variétés which eventually led his employers to the conviction that this witty young poet lacked the sobriety properly becoming in an engineer. So Donnay was ignominiously dismissed. And this was just as well, for in the following year, 1892, his modernized adaptation of the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes was produced, with great success.

Thereafter, play followed play in quick succession, ringing all the possible changes of their common theme. In *Pension de Famille*, a man chances into the boarding-house kept by his former mistress, who pays him back for his desertion of twenty years before by showing him his wife's perfidy. In *Amants*, Donnay's best play, the heroine renounces her love in order to save it, and afterwards meets her lover merely as a friend. *L'Affranchie* describes the parting of two cynical lovers, who are at bottom more tender than they are willing to confess, through the excessive frankness of the man and the woman's impulsive romanticism. *Georgette Lemeunier* and *Le Torrent*—the first, the story of how a momentarily infatuated man finally gives up the adventuress who has led him astray and returns to his model wife; the second, the tragedy of a fine woman who destroys herself rather than present her Carlyle-like husband with another man's child—are more serious. *Education de Prince* is a pleasant farce, somewhat resembling Wedekind's *Franziska*, concerned with the adventures of a young prince whose mother has entrusted his worldly enlightenment to an exceedingly capable and typical boulevardier. *La Clairière*, which similarly recalls Wedekind's *Die Junge Welt*, is a satirical picture of a socialistic community which has been thrown into bitter rivalry by the devastating charms of a young school-mistress.

In *La Bascule*, Donnay embroiders a typically Parisian farce on the quandaries of an incofrigible sentimentalist who falls in love successively with an actress and with his own wife, and then with the actress again. *L'Autre Danger* is a strong, but impeccably delicate, treatment of the situation which arises when a woman

is forced to give up her lover to her own daughter. *La Retour de Jérusalem* is a rather inane thesis piece, contrived to flatter the Dreyfus period anti-Semitism of the French bourgeois. No more successful is *Oiseau de Passage* (in which, as in *La Clairière*, Donnay collaborated with Lucien Descaves), also a thesis play, the difficulty here arising in the love of Nihilist and bourgeois, instead of Jew and Gentile. *L'Escalade*, with its amusing picture of the man who, knowing all the schola of love, yet is helpless before a woman, and *Paraître*, with its tragically comic group of small-souled bourgeoisie who, grown rich beyond their station, hopelessly complicate their lives in petty amours for the sake of being fashionable, are more in Donnay's true flavor, as are his two recent successes, *Le Geste* and *La Reprise*. Two delightful departures from the main line of his plays are *Le Ménage de Molière* and *Le Mariage de Télémaque*, the latter written in collaboration with Jules Lemaître.

Delightful works all, witty and true, even provocative; but hardly, one thought in 1907, the works of an Immortal. Yet, however suspect Donnay's qualifications for the Academy may have been, his election has proven remarkably popular. A clever, amiable, elegant old gentleman, he has, for twenty years, acted as a sort of master-extraordinary of ceremonies to the Academy, and the wit and pleasantry which he has contrived to infuse into the driest and gravest of subjects have been the delight of the press and of the Institute ever since his reception. In *Sous le Sourire d'Elisabeth* are collected the best of the addresses which he has made, beside the bust of the ill-fated sister of Louis XVI., in the great hall of the Palais Mazarin. The title is just, for in tone they are as Parisian

as she, and as Donnay himself. And Donnay is the most Parisian Immortal that the Academy has boasted since those delicious days when Président Hénault used to flee its sessions for his afternoon confabs with Madame Du Deffand in the Rue Saint Dominique.

PAUL MORAND

ANATOLE FRANCE, in a preface much quoted by reviewers, once called Marcel Proust "a depraved Petronius." As much might be said, with much more truth, of Paul Morand, but with this difference: that Morand's talent is by instinct moral, and not depraved. In the collections of character sketches which are his most natural and as yet his most satisfactory expression, *Tendres Stocks*, *Ouvert la Nuit*, *Fermé la Nuit* and *L'Europe Galante*, we have a long sequence of brilliant clinical notes on post-war European society. His single novel, *Lewis et Irène*, is little more than an elaboration upon the same theme, in the same manner. Perhaps no living writer has savored more completely than Paul Morand every flavor of contemporary European urban life. Few have absorbed so much, with such accurate perception, and with such superb discrimination. This life he describes, not with the detail of orthodox Realism or the subtle revelation of psychology, but directly, as it is focused in its exceptional characters, and as these appear to him. He gives us the outposts that more sober art has not yet reached.

The analogy between Paul Morand and Petronius Arbiter is as close as the historical similarity (which Spengler has noted) of modern Europe and Rome in the Decadence. Sidonius Apollinaris states that Petronius lived in the Greek colony of Massalia, the present city of Marseilles, which came under Roman influence at the time of the Punic Wars and under Caesar's yoke in A.D.

49. He was, therefore, in youth, either an expatriate Roman upholding the traditions of his fathers in a foreign city, or he was a provincial Tory. In either case, he was a cosmopolite. Very like Morand is the sketch given by Tacitus of this keen-eyed, humane young ironist, who "passed his days in sleep, his nights at his official duties or at amusements, and by his careless life, became as famous as other men by the sweat of their brows. He was regarded as no commonplace profligate, but as a finished master of voluptuousness. His reckless freedom of speech, being regarded as frankness, procured him popularity. Yet, during his proconsulship of Bithynia, and later as consul elect, he displayed vigor and a capacity for affairs. Afterwards returning to his life of indulgence, he became one of the chosen circle of Nero's intimates, and was looked upon as an absolute authority on questions of elegance, whose sanction alone divested pleasure of vulgarity and luxury of grossness."

It is well known that Morand was born in Russia, of French parents. "On my father's side," he told Frédéric Lefevre, "we are Russian Frenchmen since 1848. My grandfather was manager of the Imperial bronze foundry in Saint Petersburg. There my father was born. Do you know any Russian Frenchmen? Curious people, moved more deeply than any others by everything French, delicate and meticulous, with, however, treasures of indulgence for the follies of the Russians. When my father established himself in Paris, he frequented chiefly English people and those with English sympathies. . . . It was on the advice of Lord Alfred Douglas that I later went to Oxford. . . . I went to England alone, at the age of thirteen. . . ."

One gathers that the young Morand attended an English public school, served with the French in the war, and later returned to England to enter Oxford, apparently at Magdalen. "After my seventeenth year," he continues to Lefevre, "my studies were limited to subjects in which France figures simply as one country among others: geography, but universal; history, but diplomatic—that is, the history of relations between nations; law, but international law. When I was twenty, I read *Les Origines du Cosmopolitisme Littéraire*, by Joseph Texte. . . . This thesis, which is the beginning of the study of comparative literature in France, opened many horizons to me. . . . I passed months in the British Museum, where I read all sorts of things. . . ."

When Morand returned to Paris, in 1919, he entered literary society and the diplomatic service. As ambassadorial secretary at Rome and at Madrid, as a special attaché to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, his diplomatic missions and his natural disposition have rendered every part of Europe a portion of himself. Morand knows the upper stratum of post-war Europe as Petronius knew his Rome—from the point of view at once of outsider and participant. Like Petronius, he is an artist in sensation. He has recorded, as did the author of the *Satyricon*, a large variety of isolated cases, wherein the malady of the society which he describes may be isolated and diagnosed.

A perfect cosmopolitan by temperament, education, occupation, and the accident of birth; an exquisite in every function of life; and withal, an eminently sensible young man, with ethical sympathies and a certain moral squeamishness which his irony and his pretended indif-

ference cannot quite conceal, and with a soundly normal attitude to life in general, Paul Morand is in the way of making an exceedingly interesting contribution to our still meager knowledge of our own times. If the types which he chooses as the vehicles of his disclosures are eccentric and exceptional, they are so because his talent, superficial alike in its excellences and in its shortcomings, tends to the exaggeration of caricature. He has answered this objection: "I am reproached for treating only of the exceptional, for failing to look for the human and the permanent when I write. But it is the duty of the reader to look for that, to discover the conclusions which I deliberately conceal because I will not impose them upon the reader to his boredom. For me, the exceptional is a manner of attaining to the permanent. Literature should be, above all, a means of international locomotion, the most highly perfected and the most aerial."

It is clearly evident that the author of the *Satyricon* felt some remorse for Rome as he read the unmistakable signs of her decay in the features, in the words, in the deeds of his companions. It is patent to one who takes pause to tell the signs, that the dismay and confusion of post-war Europe fill Paul Morand with a similar repugnance. Remotely underlying and morbidly shimmering upon the brilliance which he describes, there is the horrible phosphorescence of death; there is a certain depraved insanity goading his people upon their aimless courses, a deliberate frenzy in their refusal to think and see, and a dark blight impending. Morand, as a completely aware child of his age, feels with bitterness the Dionysian inevitability of this procession toward the night. No word of protest escapes him; he will not even

confess the verdict of his mind; but the inner knowledge of this decline, sharpens and directs his vision and lays a mystery upon his spirit. He gives himself away only once: in the little fable of the Bolshevik child teaching the old Frenchman how to work, and being taught in turn how to play, with which *L'Europe Galante* closes. The rest is only light, spicy, ironic observation. The garish lights of the cabarets twit the menacing clouds above their roofs. But in his spirit, Morand watches these clouds gather; and it is his instinctive acceptance of the inevitable tragedy which they presage that links him, as an artist, with Charles Baudelaire.

Morand does not presume to judge the age nor to appoint judges for it. He confesses the finite, and is contented simply to record. Because his conceptions are not clear, perhaps because, to an extent, he lacks, with his own creatures, the courage to rationalize his subjective decisions, his irony is deficient in edge, in the savage impact of conviction. He does not love man well enough to care greatly what his destiny may be. These are the infirmities of Paul Morand's spirit and the deficiencies of his literary art, which, in consequence, remains rather symptomatic than intrinsically important. But he does not strive for more. He is satisfied to observe the night clubs of a city, the external aspect of a chance companion, the whimsical combats of hypocritical love, without attempting to penetrate those false but significant surfaces, to uncover indelicate depths. He is far too civilized to become passionate, far too social to be introspective, far too casual even to desire the heights. He has gone where his talent and his taste have taken him.

They have at least led him to originality in thought and expression.

Morand's early poems, in *Lampes à Arcs* and *Feuilles de Température*, disclose the first tendencies of his talent. Influenced by Blaise Cendrars (*Le Panama*) and André Salmon (*Prikaz*), though by neither to a considerable extent, these early productions—contributed to the Dada movement, yet so far from it in technique and destination—may be said to be in the direct current of Morand's Petronian endeavor. The story of "Clarisse," in *Tendres Stocks*, bears some recollections of Jean Giraudoux, who is associated with Morand in his work at the Quai d'Orsay; but, despite everything that may be said to the contrary, the similarity between the two writers ceases precisely there. Beyond the accidental references of "Clarisse," the field, for praise and blame, is Morand's own. An agreeable, ironical, urbane annotator of extreme contemporary types, he is instinctively aware of the quicksands which threaten post-war Europe, and conveys his apprehension of calamity, without the pompousness of prophecy, in the normal process of sophisticated realistic exposition.

SIGRID UNDSET

THE point which first impresses that incorrigible romantic, the "common reader," in considering the literary reputation of Sigrid Undset, is the singular disparity between the circumstances of the author's life and the glamour and passion of her fiction. The facts of this life are meager and commonplace. Sigrid Undset was born on the 28th of May 1882, at Kallundberg, Denmark, the home of her mother. After her public school education at Oslo (Christiania), Norway, she attended a commercial college in the same city. From 1899 to 1909 she supported herself by clerical work in business offices, living the humdrum life of the *Fattige Skjæbner*, the "poor fates," which she was afterwards to describe in one of her most tender novels. Her evenings and her few holidays she devoted to study and to her maiden attempts at fiction. In 1907, her first work, the realistic novel *Fru Martha Oulie*, was published and received with mild approbation. This recognition and the greater success of *Den Lykkelige Alder*, which she published in the following year, encouraged her to brave the necessary privations for the sake of the work in which she has achieved a degree of excellence hardly equaled by any other living woman novelist.

The events of her free maturity are no richer in external adventures than those of her imprisoned youth. She wrote, sparingly but incessantly, publishing short stories, sketches, and novels which, by the sheer solidity

of their merit, presently made the small but finely discriminating Norwegian literary public aware that a new writer had arisen who was destined to great accomplishments. These minor triumphs so well prepared the way for greater ones that when, in 1911, Sigrid Undset's first important novel, *Jenny*, was published, it was accorded a popular ovation which left no further doubt of its author's success. Shortly thereafter she was married to the painter A. C. Svarstad, and amid the cares of motherhood and of a brilliant household she laid the scholarly foundations for the great historical novels upon which her fame will ultimately rest. Her marriage was amicably dissolved about 1922, and since that time, she has lived at Lillehammer, a small Norwegian artistic resort, at some distance from the capital.

These facts are little enough to explain the art of a writer whose novels exhibit such a wealth and intensity of emotional understanding as those of Sigrid Undset. The qualities which marked her as a novelist of promise in *Fru Martha Oulie*, which found their first complete expression in *Jenny* and are repeated in a hundred eloquent forms in *Fattige Skjæbner*, *Den Lykkelige Alder* and *Vaaran*, *Splinten av Trollspeilet*, *De Kloke Jomfruer* and *Et Kvindesynspunkt*, are precisely the qualities which contain the whole vigor of her great historical romances, *Kristin Lavransdatter* and *Olaf Audunssøn*. An instinctive artist of a very high quality, imaginative sympathy for her takes the place of the emotion of identity which we prize in other novelists. Her realism is so delicate and so serene, and the direct, unflinching candor of her vision is so sweetly softened by native tenderness, by infinite pity, and by a pure human understanding

which goes too deep for accusation, that the final effect of her novels is as unforgettable as the spectacle of a human heart laid bare in its closest depths.

Thus, when we consider Sigrid Undset's realistic fiction, we find that what we prize it for is not its achievement within itself as realistic portraiture, as social documentation, narrative, or literature, but particularly because of the emotional responses which these stories have awakened within us at depths seldom touched by the written word or by any save the most exceptional experiences. If we were to judge Sigrid Undset's most widely known novel, *Jenny*, strictly as literature, we should be obliged to say that, despite its success and the praises which have been lavished upon it, it is anything but a good novel. It is labored and uneven, as wretchedly written in some parts as it is elsewhere filled with infinite beauty. Four-fifths of its portraiture is either lifeless or false, and its plot is such a flimsy fabric that one hardly dares to examine it too closely. Yet it is extraordinarily moving, moving in a sense so deep and personal that the emotion is reawakened in its original poignancy when one recalls the book after the details of the story have been blurred. For in this case, it is not the story which counts; not the wasted dreams of the Balzacian woman of thirty, nor her useless tragedy, nor the loss of the men who loved her in her rare moments of unfoldment. All of these things, as Gunnar Heggøen perceives at the end, are external and inconsequential, not to be counted beside the more intimate inner substance which Jenny had kept hidden and secluded in life and which she had yielded to him alone in death. Jenny's tragedy, one feels, is an empty anecdote, the only regrettable part of which

is that so much sincerity, so much genuine fineness, and so much courage, should have been squandered upon such paltry sentiments. There is no one at fault in this whole sorry business, not even the men whose weakness were its direct cause, for the destinies of these insufficient characters were not wrought in infelicitous stars, but within themselves. Jenny, Gert, Helge, Francesca, and Gunnar are all creatures too weak for life, whom life, in one degree or another, has overcome. That is their tragedy: that they have had life in their hands, but have not grasped it; that they have allowed themselves to remain unfulfilled.

Sigrid Undset was herself a woman of thirty when she wrote *Jenny*, and herself, if one may presume so far upon the intimations of biographical data, as yet unfulfilled in the sense that Jenny Winge sought fulfillment. One can offer her, as a woman, no greater compliment than to suggest this analogy between the painter-spinster of the novel and the writer-spinster who created her. It would, in any case, account for the extraordinary poignancy of the portrait, which, like all of Sigrid Undset's portraits of women, far excels, in delicacy and suggestiveness, the closest analysis of the ordinary realistic routine. The episodes in *Jenny* which make the book most memorable and affecting are invariably the moments which another novelist than Sigrid Undset would have allowed to pass unnoted or would have handled more crudely: Jenny's surrender to the somewhat puerile romanticism of Helge, her justification for accepting the love of Gert, her description of her child to Gunnar, her reactions during and after the violence of Helge, and Francesca's confidences to her concerning her relations

with Lennart. It is in moments such as these that Sigrid Undset is revealed as one of the finest portraitists of her sex in modern literature.

It is in her historical novels, *Kristin Lavransdatter* and the recent *Olaf Audunssön*, that Sigrid Undset has found her most favorable vehicle of expression. In these novels her art is mature and rounded, and her touch is sure in a sense which she never quite achieves in her earlier realistic fiction. The daughter of Ingvald Undset and his assistant in many researches, she acquired from her intercourse with that excellent archeologist, and from her own studies, a considerable knowledge and an extraordinarily acute feeling for the great past of her country. The heightened tempo and the sharper realism of Sigrid Undset's historical novels prove anew the truism that, for the scholar, the events of the past may possess a more actual life than those of his own times. It was surely Sigrid Undset's medievalism which caused her recently to turn from the Lutheran faith to Catholicism, and it is certainly the thirteenth and fourteenth century settings of her latest books which liberate her realism from the restraints and the circumventions of modern life and permit her to describe Olaf Audunssön and Kristin Lavransdatter in all the freedom and violence of the furious passions which torment and glorify their lives.

The singularity of Sigrid Undset's historical fiction is best seen by a comparison of her novels with Verner von Heidenstam's equally remarkable *Folkungsträdet*. The latter is a tale of spacious days, great deeds, and personages who are heroic even in their pettiness. Yet, while the sons of Folke Filbyter conspired and waxed great, in another part of the peninsula Kristin Lavransdatter was

churning her butter and claiming her right to love, exactly as her remote descendant might do in the rural district of Norway to-day. Heidenstam, in turning to the Middle Ages, sees the gorgeous drama of its plot-wracked courts. Sigrid Undset sees, in the same scene, life as it must be lived in every age, human nature as a constant stream, and men and women, with all their native passions and obstinacies, as men and women have always been. Kristin is Jenny born under a different star, stronger and ultimately more fortunate, but honest and resolute in the same sense, as Jenny is a stronger Martha Oulie. She is one of the great characters of modern fiction, because, as Sigrid Undset has shown her to us, and as Sigrid Undset perhaps alone could have described her, she is a whole woman, so distinct and so emphatic in her integrity that she stands, in a sense, as the representative of her entire sex.

We know of no historical novel which, in pure literary merit, in the faithful representation of a lost period, in the description of varied characters, and in dramatic interest, can be set against *Kristin Lavransdatter*, save possibly the novel which *Olaf Audunssøn I Hestviken* promises to be. As a modern realistic treatment of an historical theme, the two parts of this novel thus far published exceed even the very high accomplishment of *Kristin Lavransdatter*. In plot, the two novels are linked by a curious similarity. In the earlier book, the insurgent is a splendid woman who asserts her right to love a weak and essentially unworthy man. In the latter, the situation is similar, but the personae are reversed. Olaf's love for Ingunn Steinfinnsdatter is obstructed by the dismay of the lady's family at the interdiction against him

for having slain a man in a quarrel. When, upon his return, he finds that Ingunn has been betrayed, he secretly murders her seducer and, marrying the girl, adopts her illegitimate son as his own. Thus, in the first part of *Olaf Audunssön*, as in the first part of *Kristin Lavransdatter*, a strong lover is placed against one who is insufficient, and, although they are bound by great passions, sin is set between them—in the one instance, unsanctified love and the blood of Erlend Nikulaussön's first mistress; in the other, murder and the blemish of betrayal. The marriage of Olaf and Ingunn does not fare better than that of Kristin and Erlend. The apprehension of their sin weighs heavily upon them and, separated by a disaffection which at times mounts almost to hatred, Ingunn becomes futile and bitter in quest of the same relief for which Erlend permits himself to become involved in dynastic intrigues. In the final section of *Kristin Lavransdatter*, the heroine rises, through suffering and by sheer force of character, above the blight of her transgressions and the unruly impulses of the flesh. The story of *Olaf Audunssön* is not yet completed, but it promises to develop to a similar end, through sacrifice and the quenching of jealous hate; for the death of Ingunn has left Olaf with bitter memories and the custody of the child of his rival and victim.

A French critic, in writing of Sigrid Undset, quotes Otto Weininger's statement that "Woman is, and remains for us men, a terra incognita, because we cannot penetrate into her nature except imperfectly, and because she is not herself capable of a logical study of her ego. She cannot reveal her secrets to us, because she does not know them herself. . . . At the very moment when she

became capable of this, she would cease to be a woman and become a man." After the brilliant psychiatric study in which Probst establishes Weininger's insanity, there remains no necessity to refute him; but the generalization here made is so often true that the artistic success, the honesty, and the complete femininity of Sigrid Undset's portraits of women stand forth as the most valuable quality of her work. No novelist has ever taken us so close to the heart of woman as she and disclosed the woman's nature with so much truth and delicacy, with such simplicity and such complete emancipation alike from the masculine preconception of what the woman's nature ought to be and the feminine one of how she ought to make it appear before the male. She has done this more clearly even than Rousseau and Strindberg have done the same service for men, for her women are normal and healthy, while the protagonists of Rousseau and Strindberg are distinctly pathological. Her heroines, from Martha Oulie and Jenny Winge to Kristin Lavransdatter and Ingunn Stefinnsdatter, are variations of the same character, seen at different times and in different lighting, like Claude Monet's great series of paintings of the Cathedral of Rouen. Apart, they are individuals, liable to defeat, to error, to pettiness, to dishonor. Together, the faults of the one compensated by the virtues of the others, there emerges the full, splendid pattern of their sex—Jenny and Kristin.

SIBILLA ALERAMO

IN literature not less than in science or philosophy, it is sometimes given to one to light a torch which, whether because of the frailty of talent or the brevity of human life, he is not destined to bear; to isolate the springs of a stream which he is not destined to explore. Such a one is Sibilla Aleramo. Although herself possessed of no very considerable or original talent, she merits delicacy at the hands of literary historians in virtue of having defined, more clearly than any one before her, a constructive platform for the creative efforts of her sex. The value of any approach to a more precise designation of the sphere in which woman's very distinct, subtly refined creative instinct can function most freely and effectively is, of course, to be judged rather in its results than in its original performance. It is unfortunate that Sibilla Aleramo's *Apologia dello Spirito Femminile*, in spite of its essential soundness and its immense suggestiveness, is merely an experimental discursion, which does not attempt either to state completely or definitely to fix the bases of the solution of the problem. But it is a valuable contribution toward that end. And to expose the fundamental principles which a problem involves is half to solve it.

Women, in our engaging century, have come very close to solving their problem without waiting for it to be defined. We have Heine's word for it, and the examples of history to support his cynicism, that formerly all women writers wrote with one eye on the paper and the other eye

on some man, except the Countess Hahn-Hahn, who had only one eye. But the actual charge against them is much worse. Glancing in retrospect over the generations of women, from Aphra Behn to Marcelle Tinayre, who have represented their sex in literature, we find them, with a few obvious exceptions, to be, as artists, on the whole futile, feeble, one-sided, and dreary. The myth of woman's domestic enslavement is not a sufficient explanation of these shortcomings; for genius is imperious in either sex, and throughout the ages, whenever a woman has had anything to write, she has managed perfectly well to write it. Nor is the novelty of woman's preoccupation with art a tenable excuse, for the Renaissance had its Vittoria Colonnas, its Gasparda Stampas, and its Louise Labés, and the greatest woman writer of the ages flourished six centuries before the birth of Christ. The censures of Latin Christianity deprived woman of that portion of her integrity essential to creation; and she, when occasionally she rebelled, abetted the deprivation by exhausting her pent-up energies in imprecative protests or in writing novels imitative of the current vogues and devoted to the perpetuation of man's lyrical misconceptions of her sex.

The preference of the woman novelists of to-day for the novel of character, and their persistent cultivation of an art in which the uniquely feminine qualities of intuition and sensibility play an important part, is a vastly significant sign of the times. In the Anglo-Saxon and the Scandinavian countries, and increasingly in France, woman writers, arising in surprising profusion, are, with unerring sureness, coming directly to the methods and the attitudes most favorable to the free development of the feminine genius in its subjective, clairvoyant uniqueness.

Italy, untouched by the Industrial Revolution and not so rich, in the past or present, in woman writers of significant talent, has been more laggard in developing this singularity of viewpoint. The Italian Annie Vivantis, Matilde Seraos, and Grazia Deleddas have promised much, but in practice, have relinquished their talents to the prescribed influences; and the isolated rebellions of an Ada Negri or an Amalia Guglielminetti have not been sufficiently powerful to mark a point of divergence. But in the writings of Sibilla Aleramo, contemporary Italian literature has a perfect example of a woman who, supported by only a comparatively mediocre creative talent, but possessed of uncontaminated sincerity, conviction, and an exigent necessity to write all that is in her heart, has reduced all literary equations to the terms of her own individuality and, by virtue of this very uniqueness, has established her right to be heard with her first book.

Sibilla Aleramo has told much of herself in her two plainly autobiographical novels, *Una Donna* and *Il Passaggio*, and in the course of her confession, she has told much of the heart of woman emerging, as are the women of her class in Italy, from beneath the yoke of centuries of domestic and social repression. When *Una Donna* first appeared, in 1906, its author was all but martyred beneath the trampling feet of the contending factions which proclaimed her, in one breath, a prophet of liberation, and in another, a shameless hussy. This fortuitous unanimity of two opinions, which admitted of no indifference, gave Sibilla Aleramo an immediate vogue and insured an audience, whether doting or hostile, for her future productions. She clinched her victory by the exercise of extraordinary tact in the work which she published immediately

thereafter, by her refusal to allow her singular situation to disturb her perspective on life, and by continuing to present herself before the world, not as a professional agitator or as the chosen apologist of her sex, but as an individual, by chance a woman, in revolt against a certain concatenation of social conditions which progress had discarded. Thereby, she escaped the bane of propaganda and entered the field of art.

Una Donna remains, even to-day and to the Anglo-Saxon countries, accustomed as we are to accurate and honest representations of the feminine psychology, a work of exceptional sincerity and truth. In Rina's tragedy, from the moment when a sordid catastrophe tears her from her happy, lyrical childhood, passed in the freedom of her father's companionship and among the books in his study, to become, at sixteen, the property of a coarse bourgeois provincial—who sets his spinster sister to guard from her the liberty she craves, and who strives, with systematic brutality, to crush down every aspiration of her heart, save those of faithful motherhood and humble servitude to her domestic lord—to her eventual liberation, we have a depressing situation which even to-day is not uncommon in Italy. Then follows her faltering steps to the open: the child, whose coming deepens the mother's nature to renunciation for a subtler gain; her embarrassed friendship with the only intelligent man of the neighborhood; jealousy, beatings, solitary confinement with a few books; her first successful efforts to write, and her offer from Rome; the loss of her husband's position and her first opportunity; his reinstatement and the resumption of the old slavery; the life-promising legacy which he will not permit her to accept; and

finally, her renunciation of her home, her child, her hopes of peace, and her situation before the world, in order that her spirit might not be utterly darkened. *Una Donna* was, in its own way and at the moment of its appearance, a portentous achievement in behalf of Italian womanhood. For the first time, it gave defiant utterance to the complaint which generations of Sibilla Aleramo's sisters had stored up against the tyranny of the provincial males and the inexorable prejudices which stifled their existence.

But this candor and this dramatic sense of personal association are only a part of the achievement of *Una Donna* and of its sequel, *Il Passaggio*. Once the first shock of the subject is past—for in Italian literature, Sibilla Aleramo's social attitude is exceptional—the reader remarks that a strange, scrupulously observing psychology is at work beneath the ferment of this rebellion; he sees that these events are being subjected to the scrutiny of an eye of different luster, which views and weighs and judges them from a point of vantage a little outside any to which we have become accustomed in our literary experience. And presently, the simple explanation appears: here at last is a woman whose approach to life has miraculously escaped being documented and qualified by inherited attitudes and prejudices, who has not consented merely to repeat the conventional gestures of man-made literature. Here is a woman, writing a passionate novel about a woman and addressed to women, upon a theme exclusively feminine and feminist, who has not found it necessary to go outside the experience or the spirit of her own sex for her materials, and who expresses herself completely as a woman, without

apologizing for one word, without compromising one whit, and above all, without falling into the facile morasses of sentimentality. The apparition is not without parallel, to be sure; but it is certainly not common enough to cease to be remarkable. We think of Sibilla Aleramo's most conspicuous Italian predecessors. They are women writing in the great tradition of the man-made novel, preserving intact all the traits conventionally expected of them, and rebelling, when they rebel at all, in a manner which could shock no one. We do not believe them. We believe Sibilla Aleramo. She, upon her part, having spoken her mind, stands her ground in silence, and leaves her position to justify itself.

Perhaps the most captivating thing about Sibilla Aleramo, from the purely masculine point of view, is her ability to assert her individuality as a woman without ranting, and to carry her point without relinquishing her dignity. Despite the distinction of her style, she is by no means a fine writer; but monuments should be built to her for her possession of those two cardinal virtues. This same sophistication of temperament is carried through the long succession of stories, plays, and essays, in which she has attempted to describe and alleviate the position of women in modern Italy; and despite the persistence and frankness of her thesis, it is likewise notable that, as an artist, she makes no sacrifice of balance, of effect, or of artistic truth to the emphasis of her arguments. That she is a stylist of exceptional gifts can be seen in a paragraph; and not Ada Negri herself, nor any of the lesser poets of Italy, have given us descriptions of native land- and seascapes more lyrical, tender, and

colorful than, for example, those to be found in *Andando e Stando*, in her descriptions of scenes in Capri, Assisi, and the north of Italy.

In each of her writings, in *Il Mio Primo Amore*, *Trasfigurazione* and *Amo Dunque Sono* as much as in *Una Donna* and *Il Passaggio*, and in the least of her essays as much as in the poems of *Momenti*, Sibilla Aleramo has found—perhaps only by the wisdom of instinct, but none the less surely—her unique point of expression as a woman. We mean by this that, putting aside all established models and accepted formulae, she has permitted her intuitions and her sensibility, both richened to the highest degree, to temper her criticism of life; that she has formed her style in consonance with a series of emotional responses peculiar to herself; and that, in writing, she has abandoned objectivity in order to sequester her subjective personality for its most complete and vigilant development. She has not written, nor is she likely to write, anything great or permanent, but what she has achieved is artistically right and pure; and, what is most important, it is so from the feminine point of view. The example which her works provide for her countrywomen, she has elaborated in the dialectic of *La Pensierosa* and her *Apologia dello Spirito Femminile*. Therein she has opened to the women of Italy a new highway of artistic accomplishment, on which they will undoubtedly travel a great way. This, in itself, is certainly the worth of a masterpiece.

GEORG KAISER

Two decades ago, it was Frank Wedekind. To-day, it is Georg Kaiser who shocks and astounds the multitude and confounds the critics into terminological inexactitudes. In considering the work of Georg Kaiser, one should not lose sight of the fundamental paradoxes which he, as an artist, represents. He has become the acknowledged leader of a movement to which he does not properly belong. In his plays are indistinguishably mingled the impulses of a pure craftsman with those of an obstreperous pamphleteer. His emphatic individualism is not egoism at all, but the desperate assertion of a prophet who cries with his solitary voice in a wilderness of ruined social forms. And finally, the considerable achievements which have already placed Georg Kaiser in the first rank of the dramatists of modern Germany, are merely the beginning of the greater work in which he may justly still be expected to consummate his unique and erratic genius. Far from having, as some of his critics pretend, exhausted his talent by producing thirty plays in half as many years, he gives evidence of a still broader development along the lines so admirably introduced in *Die Koralie* and the twin plays of *Gas*. Consequently, any criticism which may now be made of Georg Kaiser must needs be preliminary, for the masterpiece which ought logically to culminate his labors is apparently still to be written.

In the brief period of its ascendancy, the genius of Georg Kaiser has been adorned with a variety of descrip-

tive titles, none of which is quite exact. The truth is, that his is an eccentric talent, ordered by a certain constancy alike of technique and social focus, but in its nature largely outside the prevailing manners of the day. Bernhard Diebold, in that exceedingly intelligent discursion upon the contemporary German playwrights, *Anarchie im Drama*, insists that Kaiser is a Cubist. So far as the point of specific technique is concerned, he is doubtless more nearly right than those other critics who have secured the author of *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* in the position which he now holds, by common consent, at the head of the Expressionist movement. But this is a minor distinction. Cubism, at least as far as literature is concerned, has by now become a department of a larger, more systematic, and more consequential effort toward a vigorous, original, and compact art for the new age, which has long since outgrown the original significance of the name, but is still referred to by the convenient tab of Expressionism.

But these considerations have to do with movements and with deliberate technical expedients. Kaiser, except incidentally, does not concern himself with either. He is an instinctive artist, writing in the form best suited for the interpretation of his peculiar message. If, in his work, he has been able to make a considerable contribution to the dramaturgy of Expressionism, this has come about because the spirit of his art, its content, and his instinctive approach to its expression, are charged with a force of conviction and a dynamic contemporaneity which have provided their own genius. There is nothing more natural, both to the man and in the enunciation of his ideas, than the broken staccato of Expressionism. He

speaks thus in his familiar discourse, and it is thus that modern life declares itself to him.

Kaiser has frequently been called a philosophical dramatist, and the absurdity of the epithet is patent in the great images of Goethe and Schiller which it evokes. Kaiser is, in fact, more free from the taint of philosophy than any serious dramatist since the loquacious days of Weimar. He is a man who has felt life bitterly without having lost his faith in life, but who has arrived at certain disturbing convictions with regard to the present course of human society. Perhaps the strongest impression which one has after reading the whole medley of Kaiser's plays, is that their author is a man who knows almost more than is decent of the meanness of his fellow-creatures, but loves them all with an impetuous commiseration that transcends finite judgment. In a curious sense, it is the insistence of this love that makes Kaiser appear more significant as a social prophet and reformer than as an artist. His social vision is not sufficiently comprehensive and coherent, nor analytical enough, to let him see wherein his world is out of joint and how he may prevail to set it right. His social consciousness is, in fact, singularly shallow. But it is passionately earnest, and is consecrated to the sole desire of humanity's advancement through the survival of its superior types. The pure passion of fellow-love and of resentment of social wrong has taken Kaiser closer to actual significance than either such a limited art as his or a far sounder social theory could have done.

Kaiser, the son of a merchant, was bred in commerce. He was born in Magdeburg on the 25th of November 1878, and was put into business as soon as he had finished

his schooling. After three years, he was sent to South America on a commercial mission, and remained for a like period in Buenos Aires, until the unfavorable climate compelled his return to Europe. Then he sojourned in Spain and Italy. His first literary work, the nostalgic tragi-comedy *Rektor Kleist*, was written in his twenty-fifth year. He was married in 1908 and, until the failure of the German currency wrecked his private fortune, lived with his wife and two children at various seaside watering-places, spending the winters at Weimar. Since the war, he has resided in the country near Erkner and in Berlin, save for the year 1920, which he passed in the Munich jail for misappropriating, on principle, the rugs and furniture of a sub-let villa, to permit himself the luxuries to which he had formerly been accustomed and which he still craved.

The influence of Strindberg, and especially of Wedekind, is emphatic in Kaiser's earliest plays; it was not until afterwards that the lighter influences of Shaw and Sternheim came to qualify their rigors. Kaiser himself claims Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Plato, and Hölderlin as his chief inspirers. *Rektor Kleist*, *Die Sorina* and *Der Zentaur* are light satirical comedies, strongly influenced by the author of *Die Büchse der Pandora*, and distinctly social in character. For a time after these early efforts, Kaiser attempted a curious revamping of legendary scenes and characters to modern situations. In *Die Jüdische Witwe*, he satirizes the legend of Judith and Holofernes; in *König Hahnrei*, that of Tristan and Isolde; in *Der Gerettete Alkibiades*, the apocryphal exploit of Sokrates in rescuing the Greek general, and his subsequent sentence. These are plays full of

deliberate anachronisms, wherein, with the most delightful malice, Kaiser flays modern institutions and prejudices. Wedekind had attempted the same feat in *So ist das Leben* and *Simson*, but without anything of Kaiser's lightness and his complete success. Beneath the dexterous hand of his successor, these allegorical satires become as lucid and incisive as Shaw's *Man and Superman*.

The best and most serious of Kaiser's pseudo-historical dramas is *Die Bürger von Calais*. In this magnificent play, Kaiser for the first time (1914) establishes the sociological orientation of his maturer work. The plot is founded upon the familiar legend of the six citizens of Calais demanded by the English as hostages for their city in 1347, after the rout of the French armies at Crécy. The story hinges upon the determination of all the men of Calais to possess this perilous honor, and the suicide of old Eustache de Saint-Pierre because he fears to arrive too late at the place of meeting. The thesis, punctuated in the play by much discussion of social problems, is obvious: that the good of the community surpasses all other benefits, and that the individual must, at all times, be prepared to offer himself for the community, and to covet that sacrifice as the highest possible consummation of his existence.

With *Die Bürger von Calais*, the plays of Georg Kaiser become significant as social documents. The erotic persiflage of the earlier comedies has entirely disappeared, and the social satire becomes sharper and more aggressive. In *Europa*, Kaiser returns for a moment to his Dionysian *Spiel und Tanz*, to preach the gospel of a new Superman. Then, in *Von Morgens bis Mitter-*

nachts, he contrives the most savage satire in recent literature upon the money-lust of the modern world and the fallacy of its reduction of all values to a common denominator of gold. In *Kanzlist Krahler*, that pathetic tragedy of the old man whose single day of freedom, after forty years of humdrum labor, leaves him with a hatred of work, he as severely arraigns the capitalistic system which, by its incessant pressure, incapacitates the individual for the enjoyment of life. In the three-part play *Hölle Weg Erde*, he relates an effective allegory of each man's responsibility for his brother's good; and in *Der Brand im Opernhaus*, he recites the more somber and melodramatic tale of a weary man of the world who seeks a new life in the bosom of innocence, only to have that innocence become smirched by the ineludible cynicism of the metropolis.

One might with profit pause to examine all of Kaiser's plays and playlets, observing in *Das Frauenopfer*, the wife who sacrifices herself for her husband; in *Claudius*, the knight who recognizes his responsibility in his wife's guilt, yet kills her to keep his honor and their love untarnished; in *Friedrich und Anna*, the man whose resentment against his wife's early seducer is changed to gratitude when he learns that she has had joy of him; in *Juana*, the involuntarily bigamistic wife who poisons herself to preserve the friendship which unites her erst-while husbands; in *Die Flucht nach Venedig*, the amorous regurgitations of George Sand and Alfred de Musset; in *Gilles und Jeanne*, the reaction of an unsatisfied and historically non-existent passion upon a violent character. But we must hasten to the great dramatic sequence composed of *Die Koralle* and the two

parts of *Gas*. This trilogy was published in 1920, but it remains, in its entirety, decidedly Kaiser's finest dramatic achievement, and the instrument in which his art and his ideology at once reach their highest and most complete expression.

The story told in these three plays is the tragic parable of man's agonized progress through materialism to the ideal. In *Die Koralle*, the protagonist, the son of a poor workingman, has acquired immense wealth by means of a long career of brutal selfishness and exploitation. But the ghosts of the past will not let him rest, and the socialistic tendencies of his son and daughter further disturb him. In despair, he one day shoots his secretary, who resembles him so closely that they can be distinguished apart only by the latter's coral watch-charm; and by impersonating his victim, he attempts to sink his identity in the happier one of the more humble man. When he is arrested, in his new person, for the murder of the supposed Billionaire, his son, knowing his own cause to depend upon the elimination of his father, confirms the evidence which sends the latter to his death.

This son makes his appearance at the head of the industry in the first part of *Gas*. He has completely socialized his great factories, renouncing the whole of his personal fortune and retaining only the portion which, in the beginning of the play, he gives to his sister's husband—who subsequently loses it at cards. The factory is devoted to the manufacture of a gas which supplies all the motive power of the country; but this gas is highly explosive, and when, one day, it begins to turn red in the test gauge, although the Engineer has carefully verified his formulae, pandemonium ensues. In the explosion which

follows, many are killed and maimed, and the Billionaire's Son calls upon the people to take this cataclysm as warning and, leaving their ruins, return to the pastoral life. But the mob, crazed by greed, shouts him down and cries to the Engineer that they will follow him "from explosion to explosion." These men, it is clear, are not the elect who will build a new Utopia. The Billionaire's Son submits, and looks to his sister to bear the New Man who shall understand his own necessities.

This New Man is the fateful figure of the second part of *Gas*. The factory, rebuilt, is now producing "Kein Gas," the ammunition of a great world war. All the able-bodied men are at the front, and only children and the infirm are left behind to man the works. The enemy occupies the town, and the Billionaire's Son pleads for peace, but is overborne when the Engineer announces that he has invented poison gas. Even as the enemy outrages the populace, the idealist begs for non-resistance, preaching the salvation of the soul rather than that of the body, and ending on a note of mystical religious intensity. But all his faith and eloquence avail nothing. Then, when he sees the people preparing for further combat, he flings the bomb of poison gas into their midst, blessing their destruction for the good of their souls. And over the carnage, in token of resurrection, the New Man stalks between the horizons.

The invisible protagonist of all Kaiser's plays is energy—raw, splintering energy, which expresses itself in every character and circumstance of his action and in every phase of his technique. "Man," Kaiser writes, "represents the most intensive form of energy. . . . The humanity of our day must resolve itself upon this: to regard

itself as a state of transition between the mankind that is and the mankind that is to come. . . . Man is really much more courageous than his parasites and camp-followers would have him believe. From the first day of his life onward, he carries death in his body; yet what extensive enterprises he undertakes! We know that to-day we are merely a high-potential conduit, pregnant with a spark which shall blaze forth only in some distant future. . . . Man is perfect from the very beginning. He is, so to speak, a finished product from the very moment of his birth. The limitations to which he ultimately succumbs are not a part of his inner nature. These limitations and inhibitions are imposed on him from without, as a result of the distorted forms to which his destiny is subjected. . . . The imperative of time decrees his fate; it may misshape him, but it cannot crush him to the point of annihilation. Every phase of transition bears within itself the mandate of eternity. And this confers immortality. For all things that have a goal, preserve themselves. The sum of energy suffers no atmospheric depression or lightning stroke. Man emerges from this epoch—an epoch which is unconscious of the fact that all its powers may be concentrated in one gigantic effort—and strides onward to an epoch in which our chaotic dismemberment and futile activities will seem like an impossible fable. . . . Energy is the eternal miracle in man, and this miracle has been converted into the blood out of which he creates, creating even himself. Man is that reality which renders all things possible, even himself. He draws eternity into the present, and lets the present open upon eternity. . . .”

This is a messianic creed, but it is altogether to Kaiser's

credit that he can conceive so loftily and insist with such termagancy upon the exact fulfillment of his ideals. He is too acutely conscious of life to be impassive about it, and he loves his fellow-man too well not to be ferociously jealous of his destiny. Georg Kaiser is exclusively a dramatist of ideas, and a strenuous crusader for those ideas. But these intellectual qualities do not detract from his effectiveness or his dexterity as a dramatist; and therein he is revealed, not as a philosopher at all, but as a practical reformer in action. He perceives, with devastating clarity, the drama inherent in ideas, because ideas present themselves to him much more dramatically than ever the eternal puppet-play of life.

And in carrying out this instinctive dramatization of ideological values in the theater, Georg Kaiser has accomplished a particular goal which sets him in a place apart from his alleged school and all his contemporaries. Although he is one of the first and most clever practitioners of the Expressionist dramaturgy, he has adopted an objective and scientific approach in the point where his contemporaries are most subjective and mystical. A dramatist entirely born of and absorbed in his epoch, he has transposed the exact tempo of that epoch in his art. His is a mechanized universe, as cruel and stark as structural steel and as curt and matter-of-fact as the telegraph: a universe of intense compression, frigid economy, and complete materialism. Here even men have ceased to exist as individuals, but disclose themselves as abstractions symbolizing the types of their various social appearances. So, from allegory to allegory, Georg Kaiser arranges his symbolical figures and plots against the back-

ground of factory smokestacks, and, by the pure passion of his conviction, makes them live, beneath their masks, a tragedy as bitter and significant as that which Hamlet designed to accuse the guilty King. Not all of this may be art. But it is something finer and more deadly.

KOSTES PALAMAS

IN its own fashion, the workaday world is generous to talent. It refrains, for example, from exterminating it by legislation and massacre. On the contrary, it stifles it (if it be not recalcitrant) with tributes of applause and gold. Upon its first appearance, to be sure, the world exerts all its ingenious persuasions to debase and contaminate it, to misdirect and render it insipid. But this is only another manifestation of the same forgivable impulse which inspires a mother to bring up her son to be a bank president and an exemplary citizen. It is decidedly something that the world recognizes, in one way or another, almost all the talent that is worth recognizing at all. That it salutes its mediocre talents with largess and its great ones with maledictions, is yet another matter.

It is, however, conspicuously true that this age, which thrusts its novelists into prominence before they are fully fledged, is strangely insensible to great poetry. The twentieth century has produced a brilliant choir of minor poets, but hardly a single poet of the first merit, unless in desperation we admit to this classification Paul Valéry, because of the exceptional purity of his few verses, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, in virtue of the vivid expression which he has given to a social situation of almost unexampled importance. "To produce great poets," said Whitman, "you must have great audiences, too." The audience for poetry to-day, in the Anglo-Saxon world and throughout Europe, is certainly negligible and apathetic;

and it appears to be rather diminishing than increasing. And this is a portentous tendency in an age which contains a deeper and more vehement spiritual ferment than any since the thirteenth century, for it means that this ferment has found a more favorable expression through other vehicles: the novel, philosophy, and, above all, science.

If this hypothesis be assumed correct, it becomes easier to account for the consummate diligence with which the moderns—the Anglo-Saxons, in particular—have ignored the strictly poetical works of the still living great of the slightly older generation. The comment is not exactly apropos, but it is perhaps safe to say that comparatively few of Thomas Hardy's admirers really understand how much finer is *The Dynasts* than, say, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, or even that most thoughtful and least popular of his novels, *Jude the Obscure*. But a worst destiny has overtaken the great poets of foreign nations who have outlived their generation. If they are known at all to the English-speaking peoples, it is by their prose or dramatic works; their poetry is hardly read at all. Thus, we know d'Annunzio chiefly as the author of *Il Fuoco*, the most unforgivably swinish novel ever written; Verner von Heidenstam by his *Folkungsträdet*, Rainer Maria Rilke by a treatise on Rodin, Hugo von Hofmannsthal by the libretto of *Der Rosenkavalier*, and William Butler Yeats by his discourtesy. Of Kostas Palamas, Endre Ady, Rubén Darío, Amado Nervo, Otakar Březina, Alexander Blok, Holger Drachmann, Antonio Machado, and a dozen other fine spirits, still living or but recently dead, we know, so to speak, little more than their names and quarterings.

It must be said that, in most cases, this indifference is rather the operation of the selective utility which controls the world's decisions than any obstinate or stupid neglect. These men have largely expressed another epoch and other societies than our own, and their poetry is therefore without spirit-moving significance to us, except in its universal and personal aspects or its occasional verbal felicities. Our error has been in discarding these poets so completely; in not culling their best fruits, in particular, and in general, in not profitably employing their work in the service of the growing spirit of international discovery which is the most richly promising manifestation of our new age.

A striking example of the modern indifference to major poetry is observable in the case of Kostas Palamas. Here we have a modern Greek poet of undoubtedly major qualities, who possesses such integrity in his own spirit and such a virtuosity and perfect expressiveness in his style, and who comprehends so inspiringly, yet so actually, the aspirations and the realities of his people, that he may be bravely named as one worthy of his ancient sires. When the complicated history of Greece in the last fifty years is considered, the greatness of Kostas Palamas becomes an emphatic quantity; and even when judged in his own merits as an artist, without relation to this background, he appears as a poet of high literary attainments and exceptional purity, variety, and depth.

The genius of Kostas Palamas is distinctly national, both in its origins and in its intellectual tendencies. He was born in 1859, in Patras, the historic city known to antiquity as Aroë, the seat of King Eumelus, "rich in flocks," and celebrated in modern history as the place

where, on the 4th of April 1821, the standard of the War of Liberation was first raised on the altar of Hagia Laura and blessed by the Archbishop Germanos. In his early youth, his family removed to the medieval town of Missolonghi, the scene of one of the most glorious defeats of the Revolution, where rest the bones of Marcos Bozzaris, Mavromichalis, and Coreman, and Byron's heart. He was educated in the University of Athens, where he has since remained as a professor and as Secretary of the University.

All the streams of modern Greek social and political life converge in the Athenian University. Thus, when Palamas became a student and afterwards an officer of the University, he could not hope to elude the responsibilities of public life. He early associated himself with the group of rebels who aspired to infuse into Greek literature a new life more consonant with the modern spirit, by rescuing it from the pseudo-classical gesture which its scholars and writers affected, and by lending it a more natural expression in the sharper idiom of the people. These *Μαλλαιροί*, "the hairy ones," as they were termed in contempt for the vulgarity of their cause, included the most gifted writers of the time; but in the opening years of the twentieth century, the names of Kostas Palamas, Alexandros Pallis (the translator of the *Iliad* and the New Testament), and Jean Psicharis were seldom spoken without bitter scorn and hatred. To us, their contention seems the wisest and the most natural cause in the world. To the Greeks, enfeebled by their years of slavery, disadvantageously situated in the modern world, and enervated by the burden of the ages, it appeared as the grossest treason. For the Greeks, in that

particularly trying time, kept their eyes fixed doggedly behind them, clinging to the ancient greatness, which they deluded themselves into believing was veritably theirs, with a kind of desperately willful blindness which refused all belief in a future not visibly linked with that very past.

The impious reformers were therefore assailed with a frenzy of resentment almost beyond the belief of one not prepared for it by an organic knowledge of the anguished national situation whence it arose. Palamas was hotly denounced and jeered at in his very lecture hall, and demonstrations were arranged against him by the students of the University. Psicharis was practically confirmed in his Parisian exile. The plant of the daily *Akropolis*, in which the vulgate New Testament was published serially, was demolished by a mob led by University students. A petition was presented to the Metropolitan of Athens, demanding the excommunication of all the reform leaders, and on that dignitary's refusal, public sentiment against him rose so high that he was forced to abdicate and to retire to a monastery in Salamis for his remaining days. These demonstrations culminated in a riot so vicious that the militia had to fire into the crowd, killing eight students and wounding about sixty others. The aftermath of this unfortunate occurrence was a series of fiery sessions in Parliament and the resignation of a Cabinet.

The courage which Palamas needed to stand firm against such demonstrations may well be imagined. He had not Carducci's obstinate ferocity, his iron endurance, his mountainous contempt for every opposing opinion, nor, at that time, his impregnable position; yet slighter insults almost broke Carducci's heart. The most quiet,

the mildest, and the most unassuming of men, Kostas Palamas simply went on his own way in the teeth of the storm. When hisses were heard in his classroom at the University, he waited for them to cease, and then continued his lecture. When his hot-headed colleague, Mистриotes, denounced him, he answered his arguments and allowed his excoriations to pass unheeded. Meanwhile, he wrote heroic poems, breathing a noble patriotism and intimating a limitless hope for the future of Greece. He wrote them in the language of the people, and by the purity of his poetic feeling, by the profundity of his erudition, and by the simple beauty of his style, founded on that of Hesiod and Pindar, he was able to lend that speech an elegance, a breadth, and a poignancy which could not fail to impress the most reluctant.

It is perhaps not extravagant to say that Kostas Palamas and Alexandros Pallis, each working in his own way, are chiefly responsible for the success of the movement which has relieved modern Greek literature of the pall of a language as obsolete as Middle English—a liberation which was not finally secured until 1918, when the Venizelos government finally succeeded in introducing in the elementary schools text-books written in modern Greek. During this long struggle, the poems of Kostas Palamas found their way, little by little, into the hearts of the people. Writing directly in the current of his nationality and his time, his bitterness, his praise, his satire, his lyricism, his every varying mood found its direct response in every heart which would open to it. In the preface to his masterpiece, 'ο Δωδεκάλογος τοῦ Γύψου (*The Twelve Words of the Gypsy*), he writes: "As the thread of my song unrolled itself, I saw that my heart

was full of mind, that its pulses were of thought, that my feelings had something musical and difficult to measure, and that I accepted the rapture of contemplation just as a lad accepts his sweetheart's kiss. And then I saw that I am the poet, surely a poet among many—a mere soldier of the verse; but always the poet who desires to close within his verse the longings and questions of the universal man and the cares and fanaticism of the citizen. I may not be a worthy citizen. But it cannot be that I am the poet of myself alone; I am the poet of my age and of my race; and what I hold within myself, cannot be divided from the world without." This hesitant boast, rendered a little pathetic by the calumnies which had abashed it, is answered by Tigrane Yergate: "In Palamas, we have found every trait of the Greek character. He is religious and superstitious, a skeptic, a pagan, and a pantheist . . . a poet and a philosopher. . . . He abandons himself to every impulse of the Greek soul. But he is always fond of drawing back, of concentrating, of trying to encompass in a general form the sensations and ideas which sway him. His principal and latent care is to analyze himself and his world. A poet and a thinker, Palamas does not attract the multitudes . . . but through his work, the Greece of to-day is most clearly set forth."

"The poetical work of Kostas Palamas," writes Eugène Clément, "presents itself to-day with an imposing greatness. Without speaking of his early collections, in which a talent of singular power is already revealed, we may say that the four or five volumes of verse which he has published during the last ten years raise him beyond comparison, not only above all poets of modern Greece, but above all the poets of contemporary Europe. Though

he is not the most famous—owing to his overshadowing modesty and to the language in which he writes, which is little read beyond the borders of Hellas—he is incontestably the greatest. The breadth of his views on the world and on humanity, on the history and soul of his race, in short, on all the problems that agitate modern thought, places him in the first rank among those who have the gift to clothe the philosophic idea in the sumptuous mantle of poetry. On the other hand, the vigor and richness of his imagination, the penetrating warmth of his feeling, the exquisite perfection of his art, and his gifted style, manifest in him a poetic temperament of exceptional fullness, that was bound to give birth to great masterpieces."

GEORGES DUHAMEL

GEORGES DUHAMEL presents an interesting case-study of the intelligently humanitarian reaction to the harsher facts of modern life. It is peculiarly appropriate that he is, by profession, a practicing physician, and becomes a man of letters only momentarily, when he has a point of view to express. His attitude is clearly that of a bedside watcher, who speaks gently at all times, and who points out remediable ills in order that they may be cured—not, as many of his more cynical young contemporaries seem to do, merely the further to torment the sufferer.

In his war experience, Duhamel came perhaps too close to the point where human nature touches at once bestiality and grandeur to endure in any exclusive and callous pose toward life. For seven years, in the field hospitals, he had trodden corridors carpeted with pain and bent over cots laden with despair. He had watched men suffer and die, and he had seen how suffering ennobles. It is not at all strange that, after having devoted the best years of his youth to binding up the sad wounds of his country's quarrel with her favorite adversary, Georges Duhamel should have been demobilized as a pacifist and internationalist.

Yet there was, in Duhamel's internationalist pacifism, something of the sentimentality of the family physician which rendered it ineffectual. It was the defect of an indefinable inner softness, of a perverse suspension of sound

political thinking, which Duhamel shared with the whole Clarté group. In *La Vie des Martyrs*, *Civilisation*, *La Possession du Monde* and *Entretiens dans le Tumulte*, he has inscribed veritable poems to peace from the midst of carnage. These are books as surely inspired as ever books could be. The absolute sincerity and depth of the author's conviction literally vibrate in every line, lending his expression rich overtones which even Duhamel's considerable mastery of French prose could not have given it by any conscious art.

But, now that the terrific calamity of the war is slowly receding into the limbo of the past, we begin to see that our original reaction to these books was lyrical, and not reasonable; that what at first somewhat carried us away was merely an instinctive emotional response to a common emotion, perfectly expressed. But emotional convictions are feeble defenses against the rapacity of nations. Hard logic, and perhaps something more persuasive still, is needed against this most illogical of man's excesses. Duhamel detests war, and believes devoutly in the brotherhood of men. But to abolish the one and to accomplish the other, he offers only words and sentiments: but winged words and sentiments of an exceptional tenderness and clairvoyance. The melodrama and the terrors of war have no place in Duhamel's pages; he can remember only the broken victims of yesterday's engagement. Yet, in the fortitude, the humility, the sweetness of their suffering, these martyrs live for us, beyond any forgetfulness, as a memorial against what must never happen again. "A human being always suffers only in his own flesh alone, and that is why war is possible,"

Duhamel says, in *Civilisation*. If a Saint Francis of Assisi were to argue against war, he could say no more than this implies.

It was indisputably the impact of the war which galvanized in Georges Duhamel that something which makes him an artist. But he had established himself as a writer long before his war books brought him international celebrity. Born in 1884, the son of a Parisian physician, he took his medical degree in 1909, but he had not practiced before he was mobilized in 1914. Instead, he preferred the profession of letters and the company of literary men. At the age of twenty-two, he made one of the remarkable group of serious young poets who established, in the Abbaye de Creteil, the most intrepid and influential movement in our generation to reassert and purify the sources of poetic thought and expression. In his *Histoire de la Littérature Française Contemporaine*, René Lalou publishes a remarkable memorandum by René Arcos on the founding of this retreat. The principles of the Abbaye have become so confused with those of Unanimism that this is worth quoting in part:

"It was on a rainy day at the end of autumn 1906 that Vildrac, his wife, and I discovered the house which was to become the Abbaye—a decrepit house, uninhabited for long years, but still noble of aspect, with its terraces, its red brick façade, and its green shutters. . . . Fifteen days after our visit, the lease which made us masters of the Abbaye was signed. This melancholy document, still in my hands, bears five signatures: René Arcos, Georges Duhamel, Albert Gleizes, Henri Martin, Charles Vildrac. We add to these in our heart that of Linard, the printer who taught us our trade and shared to the end our good and evil days.

"One of our first concerns was to nail on the front door a

placard whereon those who passed could read these verses of Rabelais:

“Cy, entrez vous, et soyez bien venus. . . .
Céans aurez un refuge et bastille
Contre l'hostile erreur qui tant postille
Par son faulx style empoisonneur du monde:
Entrez, qu'on fonde ici la loi profonde,'

and below:

“Cy, n'entrez pas bigots,
Vieux matagots,
Marmiteux borsouflés . . .’

“Then we learned our printer's trade, rapidly enough to astonish Linard. The first two volumes which bore our imprint were *Des Légendes, des Batailles* (George Duhamel), *La Tragédie des Espaces* (René Arcos). Twenty volumes appeared from the Abbaye press.

“Many young artists were the guests of the Abbaye. . . . One morning, a cyclist with powerful calves and sky-colored eyes, Jules Romains, who was then at the Ecole Normale, brought us the manuscript of *La Vie Unanime*. We read it aloud that very evening. What enthusiasm! To tell the truth, the form, the prosiness of the work, made certain among us wince at times, but we all felt that a powerfully original and rarely precocious poet had been born. . . .

“Two words more: the Abbaye was never a poetic school. It was simply an association of men aspiring to live freely and in common by their toil. If we then manifested sympathy for all the poets and writers who seemed to us to have talent, it was in no secret design to enroll them all under one banner. We had no common doctrine. It often happened that we made fun of each other. And I shall go so far as to say, with Vildrac or Duhamel, that certain of our companions seemed to us to speak and to write a language foreign to our own. The critics have pointed out multiple affinities between Vildrac, Romains, Duhamel, and myself. None of us will ever dream of denying them. They have even certainly extended to other poets:

Jouve, Chennevière, Durtain, and others; but there was never a school. We all had too great a horror of caporalisme."

We have claimed indulgence of this long quotation because it so well establishes the background of Duhamel's early work. His first volume of verse, *Des Légendes, des Batailles*, was produced directly in the spirit of the Abbaye; and *L'Homme en Tête*; *Selon ma Loi* and *Compagnons* are, in essence, only an elaboration of that first utterance. Duhamel had taken nothing from Romans, to be sure; but he had got much from Vildrac and more from Whitman, and something further, if the truth may be admitted, from Coppée and Jammes. But these debts were only for surface touches and for the examples which liberate an embarrassed or unsure expression. Everything that really counts in Duhamel's work derives exclusively from the extraordinary tenderness and delicacy of his sensibility, and the accomplished and altogether inherent literary talent which an indulgent Nature has lent him for its expression. It is easy to find stylistic parallels and comparisons, for it is alike improbable that Duhamel has ever scorned to take whatever he might find of use in the works of others, or that he would shrink from owning such debts. But when this point is put aside, and when Duhamel's work is judged only in its best examples, it would be difficult to discover in France a literary talent which has so well mastered its limitations and so completely liberated the best part of its most precious self.

Duhamel's talent, never very sure of itself when it is not impelled by an emotional conviction, has appeared to flag at two periods of his career—immediately before

and since the war. About the time that *Compagnons* was published, three plays by Duhamel appeared in Paris: *La Lumière*, *Dans l'Ombre des Statues* and *Le Combat*, the first in 1911 and the last two in 1912. These plays were failures and, we should judge, deservedly so; nor was Duhamel's attempt at the dramatic form eight years later, *L'Œuvre des Athlètes*, more felicitous. For Duhamel has no dramatic talent whatever. But in this same period he began, in *Le Mercure de France*, the long series of reviews of modern poetry which, as collected in his volume entitled *Les Poètes et la Poésie*, discloses a critical talent as indefatigably hospitable as Gourmont's, sane, lucid, and sometimes remarkably penetrating. His earlier volume of essays, *Propos Critique*, is now out of date because it was devoted entirely to his young contemporaries, but it possesses many of the same merits. Duhamel's *Paul Claudel: le Philosophe, le Poète, l'Ecrivain, le Dramaturge* remains one of the soundest of the numerous French critical works on that unaccountably celebrated mystic. One of the curious features of Duhamel's exuberant appreciation of the Catholic poet is the fact that Duhamel himself has been a Tolstoyan atheist since the age of fifteen.

Duhamel's apparent apathy after the war was really only the fallow period of a transition of style, in which he has passed from humane general observation to the analysis of particular cases, attempting to focus in the latter what he sees to be the malady of the contemporary world. This analytical method was first shadowed in his post-war poems, *Elégies*. It finds its proper vehicle in his imaginative prose. *Confession de Minuit* describes the disintegration of a shallow character—one of life's weak-

lings, unredeemed by any beauty of spirit, who allows himself to drift to nothingness through self-pitying introspection and a craven submission to outward circumstances. *Les Hommes Abandonnés* is a series of eight stories, the central theme of which illustrates the submersion of individuality when it comes into contact with mass sentiment. *Deux Hommes* describes the death of a friendship between two men of dissimilar characters, when one of them becomes successful, in the worldly sense, and the other grows to hate him for the generosity which he is now able to lavish upon his less fortunate companion.

How far this new tendency of his work will carry Duhamel, it would be difficult to conjecture. His *Lettres au Patagon* shows to what a surprising degree his art has enriched; how a delicious irony has trimmed the flabby edges of his sentiment, and how his view of life has become clear, straight, and bright. *Lettres au Patagon*, with its sharp but tolerant observations of every corner of contemporary Parisian life, in many respects is the most pleasing of all Duhamel's books. It is a series of six "letters" to a mythical friend in Patagonia, who turns out a much more provocative recipient of Duhamel's shrewd confidences than the imaginary mentor of his earlier *Lettres d'Aspasie*. They are filled, both in style and content, with continual intimations of that god of physicians, Voltaire: and this recollection of the Sage of Ferney brings the reader suddenly to reflect on how admirably the talent of Georges Duhamel, as it now exists—with its freedom from mannerism, which is the symbol of a perfect style; with its humane irony; with its shrewd skepticism, which still cannot bring itself to deny;

with its flavor of pure idealism, its spacious tolerance for all the differences and insufficiencies of humanity; with, above all, its sublime quality of pity—would have suited the eighteenth century. The talent of Georges Duhamel is certainly, at all events, best considered as a late bequest of the dix-huitième to French literature.

PIO BAROJA

IT is difficult to write of Pío Baroja, for his art is as various and as remote from familiar classifications as the hybrid life which it describes. Chiefly for this reason, Baroja has often provided a metaphorical rock whereon famous critics have come to grief. Likewise for this, he is held suspect by the great public, Spanish as well as American, who have thus far successfully ignored a whole series of books which anybody less stupid than a thesis critic or the average good citizen would immediately recognize as masterpieces. Such neglect of a great realist, who happens to be neither a pornographer, a mystic, nor a bard of sweetness and light, is one of the diverting evasions of our hypocritical society. It is therefore just that we should mark with esteem those Spanish critics who, like Azorín, have come to recognize Baroja's greatness, and with disfavor those who, like Ortega y Gasset, persist in blinding themselves to it.

Ernest Boyd, to whose efforts the introduction of Baroja's works in America is chiefly due, has called this Basque "Dickens grown sardonic," the best known, the most translated, and the least read novelist of contemporary Spain. These melancholy attributes are attested in dozens of passages of Baroja's autobiographical essays. Nor is it strange that a writer of Baroja's quality should be an uninvestigated scandal rather than an accepted, or even intelligently disputed, figure in his native land. In the sense of the Spanish tradition, Baroja's

career is an incorrigible succession of lapses from artistic grace. As a novelist, he derives from Dickens, Dostoevsky, Stendhal, Turgenev, and Balzac, rather than (as all good Spaniards should) from Pérez Galdós and Pereda. A Basque, he writes Castilian as if it were his native dialect; his style is acrid, economical to rigidity, almost brusquely direct, and innocent of the rhetorical subtleties and the finished periods hallowed by his forebears and assiduously cultivated by most of his contemporaries. His concern is ever for the idiom, never the phrase; and to the cultivated and orthodox Castilian ear, his style is crude and ungrammatical in structure. In this connection, a happy comparison has been suggested between Baroja's style and Dreiser's, which aims at the same idiomatic emphasis and, in an identical way, at first gives the impression of diffuseness and crudity, yet, upon closer scrutiny, is found to be so exactly suited to the subject that no word of it could be altered or cut.

Baroja has accepted neglect as his portion, but, with true Basque combativeness, he has launched one masterpiece after another against the world's indifference. "I pour out my spirit continually into the eternal molds," he writes, "without expecting that anything will result from it." He is one of those anomalies cursed or blessed, as you will have it, with a clear eye, a true heart, and a heretical intelligence, who, by reason of these qualities, simply does not fit into the scheme of organized society. In a Catholic society, he is a freethinker who, without the least rancor, refuses to accept the supernatural, and holds up to scorn the hypocrisy and rapacity of the clergy. In a military oligarchy, he is an unabashed reporter of the depravity of the official class, the corruption

of the bourgeoisie, and the hopeless misery of those vidas sombrías, the derelicts of the slums. Baroja does not know how to see, how to think, how to write, except honestly and sincerely. He may not always be able to see every element of the situation before him, nor to consider clearly the specific defects which have precipitated it, nor to write save from the point of view of the passionate observer; but his intellectual honesty cannot be impeached. It is a formidable and uncompromising quality, which has involved him in many difficulties, and as often extricated him unscathed by the sheer weight of its unanswerable logic. It is the quality at once of a God and of a child, but hardly a propitious characteristic in a novelist bidding for the favors of an ancient but degraded people who are filled with haughty rage at having the filth beneath their grandeur exposed to public view.

Baroja drifted into literature by the well-traveled road of journalism, but by a circuitous route. Born in San Sebastian on the 28th of December 1872, the son of a well-to-do mining engineer, he was educated in the schools of his native city and at the institute of Pamplona. He afterwards studied medicine at Valencia, and, after taking his medical degree at the University of Madrid (1893), practiced for two years at Cestona. But he had no heart for the career of a country doctor. Relinquishing his profession, he joined his brother in Madrid, where, curiously enough, they opened a bakery, which they operated successfully for six years. Meanwhile, Pío Baroja was contributing frequently to the dailies and to various periodicals. His first novel, *La Casa de Aizgorri*, was published in 1900, and was followed in 1901 and 1902 respectively by *Silvestre Paradox* and *Camino de*

Perfección. It was not, however, until 1903, when *El Mayorazgo de Labraz* was published, that sufficient note was taken of the young author to encourage him to dedicate himself to the arduous profession of literature.

In *Juventud, Egoatría*, Baroja writes: "My books fall into two distinct classes: some I have written with more effort than pleasure, and others I have written with more pleasure than effort." *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, like all of Baroja's Basque novels, is clearly of the latter category. It is one of Baroja's virtues that he is in a continual process of growth, so rapid and absorptive in its nature that the change is noted from one novel to another. Yet *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, with this qualification, may be taken as exemplary of one type of the Baroja novel. It is a character study, or rather, a group of character studies, of the impoverished nobility and the bourgeoisie of a small Basque town. The Middle Ages have not yet passed in Labraz, nor have the medieval conceptions of chivalry and gentleness, which make the figure of Don Quixote so deeply symbolical of a certain still vital element of the Spanish people, ceased to possess the blind Mayorazgo. In his house, we see "sumptuousness and penury existing side by side," and in his heart, both pride and humility. Juan is an unforgettable figure, as are most of the subsidiary characters: Marina, the innkeeper's daughter, whose devotion gives him the joy of life; Don Ramiro, his sisters Cesarea and Micaela, the organist and his nephew, the child Rosarito, La Goya, the Preacher, and the English artist Bothwell—all who appear in the extraordinarily living pages of Pio Baroja. The story is adequate and poignant, and the style is a sufficient retort to those critics who, for twenty-five years,

have complained that Baroja does not know how to write. But the novel, for all its merit, is hardly a novel at all. It is scarcely more than the outline of a novel; all the elements of character, scene, and plot which a novel ought to have are here set forth, but none of them, not even the character of the Mayorazgo, is sufficiently developed. The book stands in hard outline, without shading; as Baroja himself has remarked in another connection, rather like a woodcut than a finished picture.

In the trilogy of *La Lucha por la Vida*, published in 1904, Baroja's constitutional incapacity to dwell artistically upon any scene, to complete any picture, to limn the full countenance of any character, is still more apparent. Taken in their entirety, *La Busca*, *Mala Hierba* and *Aurorâ Roja* constitute probably the highest achievement of the naturalistic novel since Zola's Rougon-Macquart series. But immediately this is said, the difference between the two writers becomes apparent. Neither, strictly speaking, is really naturalistic; both are idealists: but whereas Zola enauiueoles the bestiality of the slums, Baroja idealizes the divine element of humanity, by refusing to accept the fact of complete depravity. One is sometimes conscious of a certain masochism in Zola's ferocity; one is never without the apprehension of a deep, fundamental love of humanity in itself and for itself underlying Baroja's most bitter or most detached pictures of human misery. Baroja, the sardonic, biting Baroja, is a great lover of his world: there can be no doubt of that. In the trilogy of *La Lucha por la Vida* he probes it, in Gorky's celebrated phrase, "na dne," at the bottom; he lays bare its sores and abscesses, wrenches its scabs, and torments its cancerous growths; but he does

so with a heart full of pity. He is an ironist, not a cynic: the ironist is a physician, the cynic is an embalmer. But to Baroja, the hope of growth survives in the most miserable atom of humanity. Nothing is hidden from him. He knows all the depravity of the outcasts of life—depravities deeper than we had ever dreamed could be. But he also knows the inextinguishable magic of the human spirit, in whose presence depravity, as an absolute quantity, cannot exist.

And so all of Baroja's treatments of life are based upon an explicit obeisance to that element, however it is called, which causes man to aspire to something beyond himself, which first differentiated man from the beasts of the fields; that element which Plato formulated as the doctrine of Immortality, and Nietzsche as the idea of the Superman. There is nothing mystical about this faith. Baroja's is a candid nature which rejects all mysticism, superstition, and dogma of whatever description. "The peril in an inordinate appetite for dogma," he says, in *Juventud, Egoatría*, "lies in the probability of making too severe a drain upon the gastric juices, and so becoming dyspeptic for the rest of one's life." A healthy mind will perceive no fundamental inconsistency between Baroja's clarity of vision, his systematic materialism, and his faith in life. It is only the incurably morbid who, in the light of history, will deny life; as it is only the hopelessly romantic who will expect of it more than a pennyweight of honesty and courage.

La Lucha por la Vida is one of the great novels of our generation, and it is full of the qualities and the defects most characteristic of Baroja's artistic attitude and method. His protagonist, Manuel Alcazar, is intended as

a typical golfo of the city slums, but instead, he appears as a good bourgeois, with a sensibility and a strength of human feeling conspicuously beyond his environment. La Salvadora, the girl whose love caps the cycle of forces which raises Manuel from a disconsolate wastrel of the streets to the respectable security of his own printing shop—in other words, from the vicious and irresolute sub-proletariat to bourgeois respectability—is the very pattern of the best qualities of the middle class. Likewise bourgeois is the gospel of work proclaimed by Roberto Hastings, and even the gospel of anarchy—a “literary” idealism, as one character contemptuously terms it—which occupies an altogether unproportionate amount of space in *Aurora Roja*, and to which Manuel’s brother Juan dedicates his life and genius.

This semi-transfiguration of the central characters is almost always present in Baroja’s novels. It is only in the minor characters that throng in his pages that we see veritable men and women, unadorned by the leading ideas which they exemplify—in *La Lucha por la Vida*, such characters as Vida! and El Bizco, Jesús, Marco Calatrava, Ortiz, Mingote, Sandoval, Señor Custodio, Leandro, Bernardo Santín, El Conejo, Don Sergio, El Garro, and the anarchists Señor Canuto and the Libertarian, and above all, in the women, from La Justa, La Fea, La Sinforosa, La Flora, La Aragonesa, and the flower girl Violeta, to Juan’s mother, the Colonel’s wife, and the Baroness de Aynant, her daughter Kate, and her mulatress companion, Niña Chucha.

These characters pass through the novel as they might drift in and out of the life of a dweller in these very slums which they inhabit. Each is vividly drawn, but each

exists only as a sketch, since the rapid flux of circumstances does not give them sufficient pause for a full portrait. None enters deeply into the main plot or diverts more than momentarily the destiny of the protagonist; which is as it should be, since in all the world there is nothing more egocentric than black poverty. Baroja's style in *La Lucha por la Vida*, staccato and drenched in the idiom of the slums, is at what Castilian purists would term its worst; but therein it achieves a natural vigor, and an emphasis and exactitude of expression which those less enamored of tradition may well salute as a new achievement of the realistic art.

Baroja has written much in the quarter-century of his literary career. Most of his novels are divided, for convenience, into trilogies and groups, although *La Lucha por la Vida* is the only one (except *Memorias de un Hombre de Acción*) in which any continuity of plot is observed—as, for example, the trilogy of *El Pasado*, including *La Feria de los Discretos*, *Los Ultimos Roman-ticos* and *Las Tragedias Grotescas*, with their pictures of Córdoba and Paris; the trilogy of *La Vida Fantástica*, which includes the early novels *Silvestre Paradox*, *Camino de Perfección* and *Paradox Rey*; the trilogy of *Las Ciudades*, in which fall *César o Nada*, *El Mundo es Ansí* and *La Sensualidad Pervertida*; and the trilogies of *La Raza*, *Tierra Vasca* and *El Mar*. The long series of *Memorias de un Hombre de Acción*, in which, during the last fourteen years, Baroja has been accumulating a sort of modest comédie humaine of nineteenth century Spanish society, is an imaginative reconstruction of the Carlist and Liberal intrigues in which the author's great uncle, the adventurer and Freemason Eugenio de

Aviraneta, took a conspicuous part. The series was begun in 1912 with *El Aprendiz de Conspirador*; it has since been continued in a score of volumes, and the most recent, *Las Figuras de Cera*, leaves the story still far from completed. The *Memorias de un Hombre de Acción* invites a comparison with the *Episodios Nacionales* of Pérez Galdós, which Baroja himself has answered by contrasting the episodic pattern of his novels with the full social canvas which the older writer provides, and by emphasizing his preoccupation with the portrayal of character rather than the reconstruction of historical events.

Baroja's impatience with all arbitrary classification has caused him repeatedly to disclaim his intellectual affiliation with the writers of the so-called Generation of 1898, and even to deny the existence of such a generation. Although we may allow him his fancy and secure him in the isolation with which he has fortified the originality of his genius, we cannot ignore the upright and heretical qualities of mind which Baroja shares with such of his contemporaries as Azorín and Unamuno. When Baroja calls his *Juventud, Egoatría* "a work of mental hygiene," and says that "all of my books are youthful books"; when, in that book, in *La Caverna del Humorismo*, in *Divagaciones Apasionadas*, and in the other volumes of those sprightly literary scraps which he terms his "intellectual spinach," he comments sharply upon life and wishes for a State "without flies, without monks, and without carabineros," he proclaims, if not his generation, at least a sophistication and a freedom which no Spaniard could have achieved if the destruction of Admiral Cervera's squadron at Santiago de Cuba had not shaken his country out of her complacent lethargy. All of

Baroja's qualities belong to that generation—his rebel style, his uncompromising honesty, his social introspection, his complete freedom from traditional impositions, his pessimism, his levity, the curiosity that makes all Europe familiar to him, and the distinct nationalism of his viewpoint, which makes him observe everything, not only as a Spaniard, but as a Basque. Of the new generation, too, is his method of reducing the social scene to its elements in groups of character sketches, and the artistic philosophy by which he conceives, as he writes in *Las Tragedias Grotescas*, that "Life never ends; one is ever at both the end and the beginning." However Pío Baroja y Nessi may deny his generation, and however that generation may deny Baroja, literary history will reconcile both repudiations in behalf of an artist whose genius is the very genius of his land and epoch.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

THERE is, about the figure of Guillaume Apollinaire, an irresistible atmosphere of ribald exuberance, genial madness, grotesque inspiration, and pure impudence. He was, in life and in art, a gross and colossal prodigy, as ingenious as his pseudonym. Born Wilhelm von Kostrowitzki, he chose to encourage impartially the hundred monstrous tales which are told of his parentage. That event took place at Monte Carlo in 1880, and almost anything could happen at Monte Carlo, even the miracle, scouted by unimaginative realists, of Jove descending to Danae in a shower of gold. Be this as it may, Wilhelm von Kostrowitzki, afterwards Guillaume Apollinaire, passed his youth with his ambiguous but aristocratic Polish mother in her luxurious château near Paris, where he was carefully educated and diligently spoiled. His mother was one of those restless creatures who cannot be at home save in three capitals within the month; and whether from an overpowering affection for her son, or from a desire to improve his mind by foreign travel, or merely to take advantage of the accidental complaisancy of the European baggage regulations, she took the small Wilhelm, afterwards Guillaume, with her on all her travels.

It was about 1900 when Wilhelm von Kostrowitzki forsook the maternal roof, and, as Guillaume Apollinaire, dawned like a bland and self-confident sun in Montmartre. There, until the outbreak of the war, he enjoyed—and with what gusto!—the familiar career of literary

vagabondage, with the difference that he usually had money, and that his pranks were always as replete in genius as in hilarity. Gifted, as Matthew Josephson remarks, with "great energy, curiosity, and disrespect," he found these qualities a more efficacious equipment in the modern world than those which the sober advisors of youth habitually commend for the conquest of life.

Guillaume Apollinaire was perhaps the last of the great vagabonds, the ultimate flower of the Bohemia which the Metro, the commercialized night clubs, and three hundred thousand thirsty Americans have forever destroyed. He entered Montmartre like a happy goldfish restored to its natal bowl. Darting, with incomparable energy, hither and there, he maneuvered his way to the fore of every artistic battle-line. Whatever the cause—what cared he for the cause, save that it be audacious?—his metaphorical bugle was ever the first sounded, his taunts the most insolent, his accents the most shrill. Apollinaire's capacity for the enjoyment of simple living was prodigious. His derisive skepticism was a likewise absolute quantity, equaled only by the exuberance of his animal spirits. To those who could endure the strenuousness of his gross wit, his impiety, and his complete lack of any reticence or tact, he was one of the most attractive personalities of his time. Certainly his personal popularity was tremendous, and his close friendship with such men as Matisse, Picasso, Derain, Braque, Henri Rousseau (whom he is said to have "discovered"), André Salmon, Max Jacob, and Pierre Reverdy, argues that there was more richness in his nature than appears on its blatant surfaces.

For, despite the improper levity of the Rue Ravignan,

Guillaume Apollinaire concealed a streak of genius somewhere within the amazing hodge-podge of his cosmos. His first volume of poems, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*, published in 1911, exhibits his talent in its first, Impressionistic stage; almost traditional, yet already a little distorted by the singularity of his point of view and by his inveterate craving for unusual and startling effects. The volume of essays on *Les Cubistes* which he published in the following year, one of the earliest and best treatises on that movement, shows how ready and how sure were his appreciations. He became a Cubist himself, and the difference marked in two years between the comparative chastity of *Le Bestiaire* and the extravagance of *Alcools* proves at once that Apollinaire was not a poet at all, but an intellectual contortionist of preternatural dexterity and aplomb.

Then came the war. As an interruption of his Caesarean progress, it was an unavoidable annoyance which Apollinaire received "with irony"; but as a novelty, it had its points. So the poet became an officer of artillery; later, possibly because of the design of the war planes and the radical tendency of their camouflage gratified his esthetic sense, contriving to have himself transferred to the air corps. Three times he was wounded in the head, and it was in a hospital near Paris, in the fall of 1915, during his convalescence from a successful trepanning, that he finished the masterpiece which his friends are determined shall not perish from the earth, *Le Poète Assassiné*. Directly afterwards, he was invalided home on censorship service, and, arriving at Paris with a brand new uniform, the glory of honorable wounds, and layers of comfortable fat and double chins, he proceeded to paint

Montmartre in rare colors. His popularity was at its height, and, making the most of it, he offered his ripest grotesquerie, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, to his peerless friends as a reward for their applause. But even success has an end. Apollinaire died of influenza in 1918, a few months after the appearance of his most important volume of poems, *Calligrammes*. André Billy has made his preposterous career the subject of an enthusiastic biography.

Apollinaire had written other fiction before *Le Poète Assassiné—L'Enchanteur Pourrissant, L'Hérésiarque et Cie.* and *Case d'Armons*, dating between 1909 and 1915. *Le Flâneur des Deux Rues* and *La Femme Assise* were published after the poet's death. But nothing that he, or anybody else of his capering circle, has written quite compares with this little masterpiece in sheer, premeditated insanity. In *Le Poète Assassiné*, Apollinaire has created a poet in his own extravagant image and set him before a convex enlarging mirror to serve as the hero of a burlesque epic. Croniamantal, for the honor of whose birth one hundred and twenty-three cities in seven countries contend, lives his life with a broad gesture and comes to an appropriate but untimely end, at the hands of a mob incited by the preposterous Australian chemist, Horace Tograth, the leader of the world-wide pogrom against poets. "Faut-il Fusiller les Dadaïstes?" demands the caption of an invitation to one of the soirées of the movement which Apollinaire, *Le Poète Assassiné*, and *Calligrammes* chiefly sired. If Croniamantal, why not Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara, Louis Aragon, and Matthew Josephson, the lonely American Dadaist? For, beyond the apparent inanity of their grimaces toward the

eternal grand-stand, they are alike moved by an altogether healthy iconoclasm to clear the ground of the débris of dead ages, in order that the Eiffel Towers suitable to our own may be built. In the world of Apollinaire, satire is a more fundamental and passionate element than humor; and it is in the moments when the satirist forces his way through the cloak and mask of the self-conscious, ribald buffoon, that Guillaume Apollinaire appears in the significance which his intelligence merits.

Georges Duhamel, writing of Apollinaire in one of his admirable little critiques in *Le Mercure de France*, accuses this zealous crusader of originality of writing "only from books." When we reflect upon Apollinaire's literary antecedents, we begin to perceive the instinctive affiliations of his talent. How much did he assimilate in translating his Italian similar, Pietro Aretino; and how much in laboring over his edition of the Marquis de Sade? how much ancient dust did he carry away upon his hands from investigating the "Inferno" of the Bibliothèque Nationale? One hardly cares; but the fact remains that, although Wilhelm von Kostrowitzki became Guillaume Apollinaire by the divine right of his own genius, it required the Bibliothèque Nationale to make Guillaume Apollinaire the author of *Le Poète Assassiné*, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Calligrammes*. This marks the limitation of his talent—a limitation which, fortunately, he lived too eagerly and died too soon to find out. Apollinaire was a sire of movements, valuable for his energy and for his unabashed, imperturbable impiety. He was, likewise, an extremely clever journalist—so clever, indeed, that, by his very impudence, he could carry off situations in which a less bold man would suffer

a fate comparable to that of his Croniamantal. But his was not a truly creative talent. If he had attempted to create broadly or deeply, he would certainly have failed. But he did not try. Perhaps because, with that curious, misshapen wisdom of his, he knew himself too well.

RAMON DEL VALLE-INCLAN

IN the "Völundarkvitha," one of the oldest songs of the Edda, is related the most gruesomely terrible story in legendary literature—the tale of the greatest of the elves, Völundr, or Wayland the Smith, as he is known in the folklore of Westphalia and southern England. Cruelly maimed, desolated of happiness, and deprived of liberty by the cupidity of King Nithuth, Völundr lived apart in his island cave, fashioning of his master's gold things more beautiful than ever the world had seen before, until at length the moment of his revenge was at hand. Then, before he flew away on the wings which he had made for his escape, he employed his most cunning workmanship upon three fatal gifts. To his master, he gave silver arm-lets entwined with the golden hair of Nithuth's murdered sons; to the Queen, he gave a ring set with their eyes; and to the fair Bothvild, Nithuth's daughter, who was to bear to the lamed craftsman the shame of her father's hated house, he gave a brooch wrought of the teeth of her dead brothers.

The relentless ferocity implicit in this tale of the sanguinary smith of Sævarstrath, who fashioned gems beautiful and cruel while black wrath glowed in his heart like the fire of his incessant forge, is curiously suggested in the literary activity of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, to whose native Galicia the German conquerors of a remote age must have brought the legend. In the whole of Europe, it would be difficult to discover another man who

can create with words such limpid and ravishing beauty as this ambiguous hidalgo, with his empty sleeve, his threadbare cloak, and his air of decayed romanticism. Beneath his cunning hand, words take on a strange, unearthly luster; his phrases sing and palpitate with beauty, and the most commonplace scene which he describes is invested with fairy luminance, as in the glow of a rich sunset. But it would be difficult anywhere to find, at the heart of so much splendor, so much perverse cruelty, moral atrophy so complete, and such a decadence of every humane sentiment. This is the flaw which renders the art of Valle-Inclán ultimately sterile, which leaves its beauty devoid of the emotion of recognition which signifies masterpieces, and which makes it, to its would-be imitators, a leper pearl, which only tarnishes what it cannot lend its own superb luster.

The case of Ramón del Valle-Inclán is somewhat baffling. A Galician, by the unique features of his racial inheritance he is somewhat differentiated, on the sides of lyricism and intuition, from our habitual conception of the Spanish (that is, the Castilian) traditional literary character. Born in 1869, near Pontevedra, he made his début in literature at the age of twenty-six, with a volume of six short stories, entitled *Femeninas*. Ernest Boyd makes some interesting observations on the peregrinations of the germs of these first stories through the complicated mazes of Valle-Inclán's subsequent bibliography, and quotes a Spanish critic's remark that "so frequently have these first stories been reworked and elaborated, that one ordinary book of three hundred pages would contain all that is original in his writings, apart from some plays and his three novels dealing with the Carlist wars."

In the same instructive essay, Mr. Boyd quotes an autobiographical note by Valle-Inclán which will immediately explain the coyness of the Spaniard's commentators, in the absence of a more dependable authority than his own, in enlarging upon the particulars of a career of which we know almost nothing that can be taken without sodium chloride, but which we feel must have been, at least in the emotional sense, singularly interesting. Mr. Boyd writes:

"When the sonatas were beginning to make him known Don Ramón played a characteristic trick upon the public. Underneath a portrait of himself which was published he wrote: 'The man whom you see here, of Spanish countenance and with an air of Quevedo, with his dark locks and long beard, is Don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán. My early life was full of risks and perils. I was a lay brother in a Carthusian monastery and a soldier in the lands of New Spain. My life was that of those second sons of the hidalgos who served in the armies of Italy in search of adventures of love, war, and fortune. . . . On board the *Delilah*—as I remember with pride—I murdered Sir Robert Yones. It was an act of vengeance worthy of Benvenuto Cellini. I will tell you how it happened, even though you will be incapable of understanding its beauty. But, no. I had better not tell you; you might be horrified.'

"With this beginning he evolved an autobiography, which proved to be simply an adaptation of the *Pleasant Memoirs*. He has since rewritten his autobiography more than once, and the result is that an atmosphere of legend and mystery hangs around him, which his actual appearance does much to enhance, as his portrait by Juan Echevarría shows. He is a tall, Don Quixote-like figure, wearing a long beard, and with only one arm. His huge horn-rimmed spectacles are like those of his sixteenth-century forerunner Quevedo, and in his youth his long black hair, his enormous collars, and his threadbare garments, enveloped in a great cape, made him a spectacle which could not but stimulate the imagination of Madrid, the

more so because nothing has ever been discovered about his life before he came to Madrid in 1895."

Azorín and Julio Casares give similar descriptions of this picturesque ornament of the literary life of the Spanish capital at the beginning of the century. How much of it is the man and how much the mask, one cannot say; for in the case of Valle-Inclán, the mask and the man have become so inextricably mingled, that the one could not continue to exist without the other. With the exaggerated hauteur which is at once a part of his pose and a part of his personality, Valle-Inclán has veiled the details of his private life in an obscurity which prevents the critics from reading intimate confessions into the amorous or exciting episodes of his books. All that we can say of him, with certainty, is that he is a consummate poseur and that he is one of the greatest living stylists. He one day suddenly appeared in Madrid, in the haunts of the young literary rebels who were just then coming to the fore. Armed only with the audacity which had brought him there, with his romantic eccentricities, with the tantalizing obscurity of his references to earlier adventures, and with the volume of his early short stories, *Femeninas*, published at Pontevedra in the year preceding, he soon made himself a secure place in their councils. Although he is erroneously counted among the leaders of the modernist movement, Valle-Inclán in fact contributed nothing to the artistic progress of these early associates, save perhaps by the perfection of his form, which is their answer to the reproach of iconoclasm. His talent, his viewpoint, are valid for himself alone. But he learned from them the immemorial passion of art; and, learning meanwhile to savor the best productions of the writers of

France and Italy, he found himself presently in the possession of a style.

If "style" were to be defined broadly and in its essence, and if the works of the author were to be judged in corresponding narrowness, it might justly be said of Valle-Inclán that he has hardly accomplished more than the perfection of his particular style. We have remarked the constant repetitions of his plots, and his plagiarisms are so obvious that they hardly need to be mentioned. Barbey d'Aureville and Gabriele d'Annunzio, Maeterlinck, Casanova, Eça de Queiroz, and Pérez Galdós are all Valle-Inclán's literary creditors, and there are so many more besides, that to enumerate them would be as tiresome as it would be futile. For, like Anatole France, whom he resembles in many ways, and like "those ineffable poets, Homer," Valle-Inclán commits his plagiarisms openly and unabashedly. His is the type of adaptive talent which requires a stimulus to creation outside of itself; and what he finds that he can utilize, he takes, by the divine right of employment, without embarrassment and without attempting to dissemble what only pedants would consider as his shame. To observe how exquisitely he has adorned what he has borrowed, one has only to compare his *Sonata de Otaña* with its manifest source, the story "Le Rideau Cramoisi," in Barbey d'Aureville's *Les Diaboliques*, or the *Sonata de Primavera* with the passage of Casanova's *Mémoires* which inspired it. One then places the works of Barbey d'Aureville and Casanova at his disposal, as cheerfully as one renders Holingshed to Shakespeare and Boccaccio to Chaucer. It is not this that matters.

The productions of Valle-Inclán's first creative phase

—the phase of the Marqués de Bradomín—will probably remain the most attractive to non-Spanish readers, although undoubtedly his most substantial work is that contained in his trilogy of romances of the Carlist wars—*Los Cruzados de la Causa*, *El Resplandor de la Hoguera* and *Gerifaltes de Antaño*—and in the quasi picaresque novels with which he has occupied himself within the last decade. His novels of the decadent Galician nobility, the two *Comedias Bárbaras* which intervene between the Bradomín cycle and *La Guerra Carlista*, contain the whole essence of Valle-Inclán's art in all of its phases. His verse, in the volumes *Aromas de Leyenda*, *El Pasajero* and *Voces de Gesta*, have a distinctive appeal in their rich Galician flavor, their somber delicacy, the exquisite sensibility of their expression, and their direct communications through the senses of sight, smell, and hearing—a legacy from the French Symbolists, which Valle-Inclán has finely assimilated into his style, and which he employs to extraordinary advantage in his prose. In his lyrical dramas, especially *La Marquesa Rosalinda* and *Cuento de Abril*, are blended the best qualities of his picaresque style with that of his verse.

It would be difficult to term Ramón del Valle-Inclán a great novelist or a true poet. He is neither the one nor the other. He has made the figure of Xavier de Bradomín, "ugly, Catholic, and sentimental," the center of a series of ingenious episodes set in luscious prose; in *Aguila de Blasón* and *Romance de Lobos*, he has created, within the dark spirits of Don Juan Manuel Montenegro and his bestial sons, a vital drama of morbid and prodigious lives; in *La Guerra Carlista*, he has described the civil wars as the frenzy of base passion that they were; and

in his novels of Galicia, he has preserved a medley of characters and episodes which the reader will never be able to forget. Yet, in reading his novels, one does not feel the flux of creative vigor which fills with life and substance the little world within the covers of a book. Nor, in reading his poetry, although it is exquisite, does one feel that Valle-Inclán is more than a gifted amateur at verse.

Somewhere in the creative faculty of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán there is concealed a flaw which prevents him from achieving even the debatable greatness of his French similar, Anatole France. For France was capable of moral indignation in the face of brutality or injustice; he was capable of emotional discretion, of humane impulses, of the precious quality of pity. Therefore, in spite of the thinness, the hypocrisy, and the frequent meretriciousness of his work, there are moments when it is filled with life, when it evokes tender emotions, when it even becomes noble. With Valle-Inclán, although his art, at its best, is a more perfect vehicle than that of Anatole France, there are no such moments. For Valle-Inclán is limited, in his artistic achievement, by a singular incapacity for any moral feeling, which places the seal of sterility upon the exquisite vessel of his art, distorts it with the lust of cruelty, and takes it as far from life as the beautiful enchanted princesses of Moorish legend.

Herein lies the limitation of Valle-Inclán as a creator. It is not that the charges of plagiarism, so frequently brought against him, have been sustained in fact. It is not, as Cejador says, that his art is marred by a too obvious preciousness. It is not because he is a swashbuckler, a poseur, and a carnalist. It is not because, in the history

of modern literature, he is a lone minstrel, who has had no actual sires and can have no inheritors. It is because he is inhuman, because there is a senseless and wanton quality in his perpetual cruelty that has no human answer, because he writes as if in an infernal void, with black hate, not in his heart, for there it might serve as a powerful creative force, but with the door of his heart closed and with black hate in his brain. Great artist as he is, he cannot create magnificently, because he cannot feel; because he cannot experience through any medium except his meticulously wrought style and his too subtle, sarcastic intellect. And the intellect is not enough.

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

IN his *Futurist*y and elsewhere, K. I. Tchukovsky, the well-known Russian authority on English literature, draws an interesting contrast between the poetry of Anna Akhmatova and that of her expletival countryman, Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky. The comparison is instructive, for in the diverging characters of these two poets we may perceive something of the duality of the modern Russian spirit. Anna Akhmatova appears, when so contrasted, as a modern romantic, preoccupied with the question of human fulfillment through love, and responding with quick appreciation to the beauties of Nature; remembering the past with unashamed sentiment, and a little disconcerted by the intrusive crassness of the machine age. Mayakovsky occupies the opposite position, contradicting her every aspiration, ridiculing everything that she holds dear, and asserting the invincible glories of industrialism.

The two poets represent, in a word, the spirit of those two great, perpetually opposed centers of Russian culture, Petrograd and Moscow. The accent of their voices, and their very language, are different. Akhmatova's is low, sweet, and gentle. Mayakovsky's is loud, strident, and aggressive. Akhmatova cherishes the past, which holds for her many dreams too precious to be forgotten, yearns for love, and swoons at the beauty of a solitary leaf on a twisted branch against the sunset. To Mayakovsky, these are frivolous conceptions which impede

the bright progress of the liberated spirit. He rejects the past and shouts the battle-cry of the future. When he loves, he loves as a man, fiercely and painfully; and when he dreams, he dreams of revolution. Beauty for him is limned in the stark ribs of a machine eager against the sunrise. There can be no doubt which is the greater poet, for a whole people has answered the voice of Mayakovsky. But, as the music of Schumann may give us a keener esthetic delight, despite the spiritual disparity of the two composers, than the music of Bach, so we return to the modest lyrics of Anna Akhmatova.

Mayakovsky confines something of the history of his life in the exceedingly characteristic autobiographical sketch "Ya Sam" ("I Myself") with which he prefaces his *Tricenadtsat Let Raboty* (*Thirteen Years of Work*), the first important collection of his poems, covering the period from 1909 to 1922. He was born at Bagdady, a village in the province of Kutais, in East Russia, on the seventh of June. He is not certain whether the year was 1893 or 1894, but a reference in his poem "1914," "Here I come, handsome and twenty-two," gives us license to presume that he believes the earlier date the more correct. His father, a poor forester, was ambitious for his son, and sent him to the gymnasium at Kutais, the seat of the province. There young Mayakovsky learned to love Pushkin, as he had, at an earlier time, learned to love the romance of Don Quixote, in which Turgenev perceived a reflection of one side of the Russian character. There also he learned to hate all old things, for he suffered the ridicule of his classmates when, upon being asked the meaning of the Old Slavonic word for "eye," "oko," of which only the plural, "otchy," is retained in

modern speech, he had answered with the vulgar Caucasian meaning of the word, which is "three pounds." A little later, when, during the Russo-Japanese War, many of his Caucasian friends were drafted into a service odious to them, he learned a profound hatred of war which, despite his pugnacious masculinity, has remained with him to this day. •

Mayakovsky was happy at the gymnasium. His talent for painting was discovered and cultivated almost from the first, and he stood high in all his classes, until 1905. Then he became interested in the Revolutionary movement, and at once his marks fell deplorably. He began writing verses at the same time, and in the following year, his father having died, he removed to Moscow with his mother and attended a gymnasium there. Beset with poverty and in constant peril of arrest because of his political affiliations, Mayakovsky nevertheless pursued his studies with diligence and continued to write, his first "half-poem," as he himself characterizes it, being published in a revolutionary periodical issued surreptitiously by the radical students at the gymnasium. His favorite studies were philosophy and economics, and he was strongly influenced in the one by Hegel and in the other by Marx and Lenin. In 1908, he joined the Bolshevik party, and twice he was arrested, imprisoned, and at length set at liberty, in the absence of evidence sufficient for a conviction.

The Symbolists, under the leadership of Balmont, were then at their greatest popularity. Turning now for the first time seriously to poetry, Mayakovsky embraced what he thought was Symbolism. His literary efforts were miserable failures, but he did not know that he had

failed because he had tried to force into the mold of the prescribed poetic forms the new and vital subjects which his active and vividly contemporary mind forced him to write about. In despair, he returned to painting, and energetically defended the work of such then radical artists as Larionov and Mashkoy; but even then he saw the Bubnovy-Valet as only a tame promise of a future liberation of art. He was fortunate, however, in gaining the friendship of David Burliuk, for Burliuk became the deepest and most beneficent influence in his art. It was to Burliuk that, one day, he showed one of his new poems, written in the style which he had developed for himself; and Burliuk, who had himself begun his career as a poet, immediately detected its true authorship, although Mayakovsky had pretended that the verses were the work of an anonymous friend, and enthusiastically proclaimed the genius of the youth from Kutais.

Mayakovsky's future, from that moment, was clearly determined, although he still had before him years of bitter struggle before his countrymen would accept the verdict of the ever-generous Burliuk. When the Futurist movement was organized, in 1912, Mayakovsky was one of the most active leaders, and, in collaboration with Burliuk, he drafted the first historic manifesto of the movement, "A Blow in the Face of Public Opinion." He participated in the exhibitions of the movement, wore a yellow waistcoat for the cause, and got himself expelled from the art school for his pains. Then he traveled here and there throughout Russia, lecturing and giving public readings. In 1913, he wrote and produced his extraordinary play, somewhat piquantly entitled *Vladimir Mayakovsky*, and good Muskovites paid unequivocal

tribute to its originality by hissing it off the stage. Then came the World War, and Mayakovsky's first creative period ended. He had become a man, and he was about to become a poet.

There are four sentiments which are inseparable from Mayakovsky's significance. One is the instinct of revolution. Another is the necessity for the vehement expression of all the poet's passions, whether intellectual or physical, which constitute his individuality as a man. Another, his vivid sense of contemporaneity, his evangelism of the machine age. And finally, his bitter hatred of war. These sentiments, under the fire of the events of 1914, coalesced to produce Mayakovsky's first great poem, "The Thirteenth Apostle," which a waggish censor, whose zeal is still attested by rows of dots in the published version, rechristened by the name which it now generally bears, "A Cloud in Pants." It is in this memorable testament of spiritual and physical nostalgia that Mayakovsky foreshadowed the Russian Revolution. Unrequited love is his theme; his meeting with Marya, his glorification of her, his glorification of his passion, his glorification of its hopelessness. In the second and third parts of the poem, he views the world about him, with the eyes of a restless and dissatisfied animal. It is a hateful world that he sees, a world enchained and abject. But he himself is great. "Glorify me! I am more than equal with all the great. I set 'Nihil' on all that has been done before me." Across the chaos, he sees the dawn of hope for his miserable land. "I am laughed at by the people, like a long, salacious anecdote. But I can see, stalking across the mountains of time, one whom none other can see. And where the eye, falling short, stops, blinded by the on-coming hordes,

I see the year 1916 advancing, crowned with Revolution's wreath of thorns: and before you I come as the fore-runner of that year. . . . I am everywhere where there is suffering and pain, and I have crucified myself in every tear that has been shed. I have cauterized the sore where there once was tenderness, and that is a harder feat than to storm a thousand Bastilles. . . . And when, at the appointed time, you shall come with the Revolution to meet your sorrows, I shall pluck forth my soul, dripping with blood, and hang it out like a flag." Then, in the fourth part of the poem, he returns to his cruel beloved, sobs over her anew, and assaults God in his wrath.

"A Cloud in Pants" caused a tremendous stir in Russia, and definitely established Mayakovsky's reputation as a poet of the masses. The voices of dissent were silenced, and the poet was lionized by Bohemian literary society. He continued in the editorial position on the *Satiricon* by which he made his living, but already he was planning other ambitious works, notably his "Man, an Object" and his epic, "War and Peace." When the great event which he had prophesied came to pass, in 1917, Mayakovsky immediately accepted the Revolution. "It was more natural for Mayakovsky to accept the Revolution than for any other Russian poet, because it was in accordance with his whole development," says Trotzky, in *Literatura i Revolutzia*. "For Mayakovsky, the Revolution was a true and profound experience, because it descended with thunder and lightning upon the very things which Mayakovsky, in his own way, hated, with which he had not yet made his peace. Herein lies his strength. Mayakovsky's revolutionary individualism poured itself enthusiastically into the proletarian revolution, but did not blend with it.

His subconscious feeling for the city, for Nature, for the whole world, is not that of the worker, but of a Bohemian. 'The bald-headed street lamp which pulls the stocking off the street'—this striking image alone, which is extremely characteristic of Mayakovsky, throws more light upon the Bohemian and-city quality of the poet than all possible discussion. The impudent and cynical tone of many images, especially of those of the first half of his creative career, betrays the all-too-clear stamp of the artistic cabaret, of the café, and all the rest of it.

"Mayakovsky is closer to the dynamic quality of the Revolution and to its stern courage than to the mass character of its heroism, deeds, and experiences," Trotzky continues. "Just as the ancient Greek was an anthropomorphist and naïvely thought of the forces of Nature as resembling himself, so our poet is a Mayakomorphist and fills the squares, the streets, and the fields of the Revolution with his own personality." No one who has seen Mayakovsky or read one of his poems can doubt the absolute justice of this criticism. He is a figure made for the center of the stage. He holds the center of the stage as by a natural right, whether it be in a drawing-room or in a poem. After the Revolution, Mayakovsky plastered Russia with the posters which he designed by hundreds for the new Government. In 1918, when the German communists visited their comrades in Moscow, it was his play, "Mystery-Buffer," which was performed in the Theater of the Revolution for their pleasure and edification. It was he who, in 1922, organized MAF, the Moscow Association of Futurists, which is largely devoted to the publication of his own works—a highly profitable enterprise, indeed, since the only Russian

author whose books sell more largely than Mayakovsky's is Demyan Bedny, the popular fable poet, whose works are distributed by the millions of copies. It is he who was Lenin's favorite poet, and who has lamented the death of his chief in a long poem which promises to become another national anthem. It is he who, as editor of *Lef*, the most influential organ of the radicals in art and politics, dictates the attitudes of the most important group of the Russian intelligentsia. Mayakovsky is everywhere, and Mayakovsky is always Mayakovsky. His personality fairly bursts from everything he touches and from every line he writes.

There are two versions of "Mystery-Buffe" in *Treenadtzat Let Raboty*, and probably another for every actor who has ever considered the play for theatrical production. This brings us to one of Mayakovsky's most interesting eccentricities as an artist. Art he conceives as the crystallized substance and spirit of a whole people, and the poet, only its accidental instrument of transmission. Therefore, however vigorously he may assert his own personality, the work itself belongs to the society which it expresses and from which it has arisen. This society exists in a state of change. Therefore, the work itself must be altered freely when the necessity arises, in order to remain valuable and expressive. From the viewpoint of another personality, at another time or place, the whole character of this society may differ from that of the original conception. Consequently, Mayakovsky grants to every actor reciting his poems or producing his plays, the privilege of inserting in them whatever revisions and emendations he may believe to be, at the moment, desirable or necessary. In his poem, his play, Mayakov-

sky wishes to create a heroic mold into which every reader can pour his own spirit; and if he is somewhat too much inclined to make this exemplary pattern in his own image, he is at least generous with the materials of the transfiguration.

"Mystery-Buffer" is intended, as its sub-title proclaims, to provide "A Heroic, Epic, and Satirical Picture of Our Epoch." It is a poetic drama in six scenes, its evangelistic championship of the proletariat being the Mystery and its satire of the bourgeoisie being the Buffer of its conception. These two elements are not always easy to discriminate, for here, as in all of Mayakovsky's writings, the literal and the symbolical significance of the drama are merged in an almost inseparable whole. A great deluge has destroyed the world, and a variegated company of survivors have taken refuge on a mountain-top. There are: an Abyssinian, a Hindu Rajah, a Turkish Pasha, a Russian Speculator, a Chinaman, a Fat Persian, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, a German Priest, an Australian, the Australian's Wife, an American Diplomat, a Red Army Soldier, a Street-Lamplighter, a Chauffeur, a Miner, a Carpenter, a Laborer, a Servant, a Blacksmith, a Broker, a Washer-Woman, a Seamstress, a Machinist, an Eskimo Hunter, an Eskimo Fisherman, a Compromiser, and a Woman with Bundles. Here, on the top of the earth, are gathered these few, all that is left of the human race, an equal number of the "clean" and of the "unclean," of the bourgeoisie and of the workers. They must build an ark to take them across the waters. Building an ark involves work. There is a conference upon the subject, and it is determined that the "unclean" shall, as heretofore, do the work. This, as heretofore, they do.

But the building of the ark only begins the troubles of this unhappy company. In the second scene, they are abroad on the deep. Needing a leader, they have elected the Abyssinian as king. Each of the "clean" has been appointed to a suitable ministry. The "unclean" have not been embarrassed by the cares of office, so they might remain free to do the work. Everything is restored, in this Utopia, as it had previously existed in the world. When the food is divided, the lion's share is, as heretofore, reserved for the "clean." But the Abyssinian eats all the food. More must be found, and finding food involves more work. So a Republic is established, and the "clean" welcome the "unclean" in the embrace of fraternal democracy and set them out on the quest. When the time for the division comes, however, democracy is forgotten and the old order again reestablished. At this point, in the first version of the play, the workers drop their opponents overboard and found a Socialist republic under the leadership of The New Man, a personage resembling "the most ordinary of men," who comes to the ark, boldly walking upon the waters, and preaches a new Sermon on the Mount, teaching the workers "not to look to the future for felicity, but to create your heaven on the earth."

The third scene is in Hell—the fire-and-brimstone Hell of early Christian theology. But the workers find this conflagration not at all exciting after their foundries and anvils and blasting furnaces, and they tell Beelzebub and his devils how utterly insignificant their boasted Inferno really is as compared to a steel mill. The recital so frightens Beelzebub that he ejects the whole company from his comfortable haven. Then they fare to Heaven,

where they are bored to distraction. All the saints of the earth are assembled there, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tolstoy, with Gabriel, Methuselah, and the cohorts of angels, arch- and ordinary. The whole atmosphere is much too saccharine for such vigorous men to suffer. So they make their apologies to God, and depart. They pass, in the fifth scene, through the Land of Destruction, where stand the lugubrious remnants of the old world of war and revolution, and at length they arrive at the Promised Land. It is the land of everyday life, filled with the implements of modern industrialism. And upon the coming of man, all the objects of this universe are filled with life. They speak and move and, in an affecting scene, they make a love-pledge with the workers who are at length restored to them as veritable lords. Thus, the earth comes to harmonious perfection, and thus it is prepared for the advent of the Man of the Future.

"150 Millions," one of Mayakovsky's most remarkable poems, was published anonymously in 1919, but its authorship was at once discerned in the style. "No one is the author of this poem of mine," Mayakovsky says, again asserting his belief that his art is the irrepressible expression of his people's spirit. The theme is the mortal combat between Ivan, the typical Russian folk-hero, who has, whereby to defend himself, only "a hand and another hand, and that one thrust in his belt," and Woodrow Wilson, the champion of capitalistic autocracy, "swimming in fat," and armed with "pistols with four cocks and a sword bent in seventy sharp points." Trotzky, in *Literatura i Revolutzia*, attacks this poem bitterly, and doubtless justly; but it remains one of the most curious literary products of Russian Futurism.

Among Mayakovsky's other books, which are exceedingly numerous, we have space to mention only *Pro Eto (About This)*, a volume of love poems dedicated "To She and Me," and illustrated, in a most extraordinary manner, with patterns of newspaper cuttings and advertising posters, assembled in crazy-quilt designs by the artist Rodtchenko; and *Mayakovsky dlya Golosa (Mayakovsky for the Voice)*, a collection of Mayakovsky's shorter inspirational songs, especially adapted for reading, and illustrated in a still more unusual fashion with typographical decorations arranged by Lissitzky. Both volumes were published in 1923. The latter volume is the only book of the poet's which has not enjoyed a tremendous popular success, its failure being obviously due to its extremely high price.

Considerable and immediate as is Mayakovsky's social importance, his esthetic contribution is a quantity troublesome to determine in this generation of change. That discerning critic, N. Tchuzhach, in his *Toward a Dialectic of Art*, rightly claims that Mayakovsky is the highest type of the revolutionary poet in the world to-day. This, however, specifies his limitation as well as defining his quality. The revolutionary poet is never an esthete, and the common values of traditional poetry are no more to be applied to him than are the traditional acceptances of the social order which he has cast off. Y. E. Shapirstein-Lers, in his book on the social significance of Russian literary Futurism, points out that the writers of Mayakovsky's school proved themselves from the first to be Nationalist, by their repudiation of European culture and by their efforts to revive the flavor of Russian peasant art; but he asserts that Futurism was essentially bour-

geois and Bohemian until the Revolution restored it, with Mayakovsky in the forefront, to the people, to whom it had always tended emotionally in its sharp satire of the capitalistic system. Thus, we see how Mayakovsky's birth, education, and artistic affiliations prepared him for the Revolution to which he has contributed so much.

How, then, are we to view the poet of the Revolution esthetically? The answer is, that we cannot so view him; that we must accept or reject him as one does a revolution. He is a figure of contraries, himself both Mystery and Buffe, as R. V. Ivanov-Razumnick remarks. He is an extremist, a dynamist, speaking always in terms of millions, proclaiming always intense emotions, gigantic catastrophies, revolutions, and carnage. He is a grandiose egotist, speaking forever of himself. "I will wear the sun in my eye like a monocle," he says. He asserts his physical being, which is right; but he knows nothing else. As an artist, he admits, in general, the influence of the chief Futurist poets, Khlebnikov, Pasternack, Zdanevich, and Kruchonykh, and in particular, that of the Symbolist satirist Sasha Cherny, but he has far outdistanced them all. Still contaminated by the exhibitionism of the Futurist movement, he plays to the galleries, assumes postures, and shouts at the top of his voice; in a word, he dangerously approaches pure charlatanism. Everything about his poetry is loud and strident, keyed to a pitch which no poetry can sustain and still remain poetry. He is frankly didactic, and constantly repeats himself. He is utterly devoid of a sense of proportion, of a sense of self-criticism, and of the faculty of objectifying his work. His realism is too extreme, upon the one hand, and his fantasy

is too flagrant, upon the other. There are moments when he is both absurd and stupid.

He is, nevertheless, Mayakovsky. His lines blare like bugles. His rich metaphors—"And in the sea, red like the Marseillaise, the sunset was shuddering in its last agonies"; "Jesus Christ is inhaling the odor of the forget-me-nots that are growing in my soul"; "The night black as Azeff," the traitor—strike to the quick with a poignancy that no rhapsodic eloquence could equal. His inspired use of the vulgar idiom of the streets; his innovations in the language—his neologisms, his revivals, his employment of verbs as nouns—many of which have already been adopted into the common speech; his virtuosity in words, which renders him, at the moment of reading, irresistible; his singular use of complicated interlinear rhymes, and his rhythms, so vigorous and so ingeniously contrived that they seem to leap forth like flames—these are sufficient to convince the most reluctant that, if Mayakovsky has rejected the niceties of traditional prosody, he has found another vehicle which is, for himself, infinitely more pungent and effective. Whether this is, in fact, merely the accident of his genius, is beside the point. What is important is that he has genius.

CARL STERNHEIM

IN a senescent culture, in a diseased and enfeebled world that has outlived itself and totters to its ruin (the conception is Carl Sternheim's!), the satirist becomes a more decisive figure than the poet, the prophet, or the philosopher. A culture newly born has need of prophets to strengthen it with the illusions of flattering deceits. In its youth, it has need of poets to fill it with warlike vigor and the exaltation of high purposes. In its maturity, it needs philosophy to mitigate its headstrong pride and teach it calm and the acceptance of things as they are. But when a culture is old and worn out, the prophets cry vainly in the wilderness; the songs of the poets grow mawkish, and philosophy prates of emptiness and despair. Then—and only then, since a vigorous and confident world cannot bear to have its follies held up to ridicule—the satirist becomes a figure of benevolent ruthlessness. By exhibiting, with tactful exaggeration, the symptoms of the world's distress, he arouses, in the intelligent, an apprehension of peril. His work becomes, in this respect, purgative and useful. By displaying these tragic shortcomings in a ludicrous light, he teaches others to laugh on the brink of destruction. And if one can laugh as the clinging eddies of the whirlpool descend into the void, one does not go mad.

The satirist is not necessarily an enemy of society. Rancor is the property of the cynic. The satirist is never destructive, save where it is necessary to level a crooked

edifice in order to make room for one which will be straight and tall. His aim is ultimately to clarify and regenerate. His medium is the most swiftly effective of human instruments—ridicule, stronger than all the armies of wrath and prejudice. Since an extreme case requires stringent local treatment to remove the seat of the corruption, the satirist sometimes becomes ferocious, bitter, and even cruel. But at bottom, his attitude differs from that of the cynic precisely inasmuch as his anger arises from love and disappointed faith. The satirist in his heart loves and believes; the heart of the cynic is sterile. The satirist prepares his world for a finer to-morrow; but the world of the cynic is already in ashes, and to-morrow those ashes will only be a little more desolate. Thus, while the cynic remains a significant social phenomenon, the satirist may become a social force of the first order.

It is natural that Germany, where western civilization has been exploited with conscious intensity for a century and a half; where it has, in some aspects, risen to its highest development, and where it has sustained the severest shocks of the war, should produce the clearest evidence of the depravity of that culture. Post-war Germany, in this respect, is a clinical case worth observing, although, we think, with a great deal more optimism than despair. And the best approach to the conditions and attitudes in Germany which may, with justice, be called symptomatic, is through her contemporary satirists. The voluminous testimony of her social philosophers can tell us little, and most of us do not understand the transfigured language of her art. But the messages of her cynics and satirists are patent to all beholders. In the

historical pessimism of Spengler and his school, we behold the dread of the most sensitive German intellects. But social analysis, and above all, satirical criticism of the bourgeois class, is more revealing, as evidence, than any philosophical skepticism. In the writings of Carl Sternheim, we have something which, if it is not Germany (as it certainly is not), is very close to one portion and one attitude of the German people.

We know little of Sternheim, save that he is middle-aged, Jewish, and reputedly as disagreeable as Tennyson was before he became the Poet Laureate. The man, in this case, does not matter. We have his works before us, and in these we can see, not Carl Sternheim, but Carl Sternheim's Germany. In his fantastic comedies of the German bourgeois life, which he sarcastically terms "heroic," in *Europa*, *Die Deutsche Revolution*, *Berlin oder Juste Milieu*, *Tasso oder Kunst des Juste Milieu*, *Libussa*, and all the books which have come sputtering from his raucously laughing, iconoclastic pen, we have a panorama of decay and futility. It would be tragic, if Sternheim did not show it to be so inexpressibly ludicrous; desperate, if he did not present it, by means of an adroitly calculated art, in such a way as to leave us with the conviction that all is not yet lost, and that there is still time to bring this reeling world back to its straight course.

Sternheim's comedies, like the plays of Oskar Kokoschka, are not easy for Americans who have not lived intimately in Germany to understand. He has, however, perfected a more universally eloquent medium in what remains, so far, at least, as the world outside of Germany is concerned, his most solid work, the *Chronik*

von Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts Beginn. In the fourteen stories which make up this chronicle of follies and defeats, Sternheim has contrived to denude what he sees to be the soul of the German bourgeoisie, with all its inconsistencies, its virtues, its lusts, its lack of stamina, its frivolous ambitions, its empty pretensions, and its occasional substantial virtues. In "Vanderbilt," for example, he ridicules that bourgeoisie as it reaches forward impudently to grasp a portion of life to which it ought not aspire; and in the more famous story of "Napoleon," he shows the reverse of the medal in an almost tender tale of courageous and patient struggle against adverse circumstances, which is undaunted by every misfortune but, in the end, exasperated beyond endurance by the crassness of the newly rich.

The chief recipient of Sternheim's abuse is the bourgeois social "climber," who, he seems to feel, is especially responsible for the undermining of the structure of modern society. In his comedies, begun as long ago as 1908, he takes the destinies of the Maske family as an example. In the first, Theobald Maske is seen as an abject government employee, much disturbed by the fear that an embarrassing accident, which has happened to his wife in public, will endanger his position. In the second, Theobald's son, Christian, filled with a desire to rise in the world, follows the eminent example of Sir William Davenant, who claimed Shakespeare as his father, and, by cleverly sacrificing his mother's good fame, manages to convince his aristocratic beloved that his blood is sufficiently blue to mingle with her own. Finally, in "1913," he appears as the great captain of industry, Christian Maske Freiherr von Buchow, Excellenz, a completed aris-

tocrat. In another play, the whole life of a scholar is upset by the sudden expectation of inheriting a fortune of 140,000 marks. In *Burgher Schippel* and *Tabula Rasa*, the insolent rise of the bourgeoisie to financial prestige is again burlesqued. And the lesson, in each case, is that vaulting ambition makes the bourgeoisie fawning, unscrupulous, and cruel in the going, and leaves them restless and hypocritical anomalies in the end. It is Sternheim's wish, behind his brutal scorn, to bring them back to the simple humanity which they have so long forgotten.

FRANK THIESS

IF there is one novelist of young Germany for whose future accomplishment all the signs of genius hold forth rich promise, that man is Frank Thiess. We know little more than this about him. We need to know nothing more. The date and place of his birth, the details of his genealogy and education, and the other infinitesimae of his life, are readily divulged by his publisher's catalogue or by any late German biographical dictionary; but these details are not as yet conclusive to trace the origins or fix the nature of his genius. For whatever, as time shall determine in its own way, Frank Thiess will offer to the world as his special gift, it is not likely that his spirit will be bound by any accident of locality or circumstance. Even in the little that he has thus far published, it is clear that, beyond the particular limits of his narrative, his imagination has grasped and penetrated the larger outlines of a world situation concentrated in the crisis of a nation. Aside from the promise of *Der Tod von Falern*, the realization of *Die Verdammten* and *Der Leibhaftige* make it clear, almost beyond the possibility of a doubt, that in Frank Thiess, modern Germany has found an epic chronicler, a merciless inquisitor, and an implacable exorcisor of her passionate despair.

In the art of Frank Thiess, the starkness of French Naturalism meets the high inevitability of the classic tragic spirit and the grateful resignation of the new German Buddhistic mysticism. These three elements, ex-

pressed through a literary vehicle distinguished alike by its reticence and its poignancy, open the heart of a torn and convulsed nation. Everywhere about him, Thiess sees infinitely multiplied despair, depravity, cynicism, and rejection. He contemplates this chaos honestly and fearlessly. Yet he does not himself despair, nor yield himself to passion or bitter mistrust, nor reject God amid the carnage. He sees, in every wound, the hand that has dealt the blow; and in the secret places of his spirit, the faith which can ease and heal it. While God yet lives in the spirit of man, there is no place for despair, if the wounded but have the strength to turn themselves to the dawn.

Such is the faith that illumines *Die Verdammtcn*, the first novel by Frank Thiess to achieve conspicuous success. The plot, which seems to be borrowed from Chateaubriand and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, is ingeniously worked out, but not very convincing in its outlines. Conviction, however, rests in its characters, for each of them is of the very stuff of life. Axel von Harras, the son of a Baltic nobleman of the Ancien Régime, has returned to his old home, after many years, to assume the dignities of his inheritance. In his infancy, thirty years before, his mother, unable to support the dissoluteness of the Baron, had secured a divorce, and had lost her son to her husband's brutal vindictiveness. Yet, the years of separation, the scandals of his father, the influx of different ideals, and the influence of the foreign wife whom he has married, have not sufficed to obliterate the fixed lines of Axel's native disposition. When his frivolous wife deserts him, he reposes all his love in his newly-recovered mother and sister. To him, the old noblewoman resembles a modern Cornelia, whose devotion has become the more

steadfast and tragic in its arid years. After the defection of his wife, his sister grows to embody, to his mind, all the richness of beauty, faith, and aspiration; and she, in turn, invests her brother with the highest qualities which her still virginal heart can conceive. But, despite the closeness of their blood, they have met as strangers. They have come together, after many years, not as brother and sister, but as the finest realizations of manhood and womanhood. So, in both their hearts, gathers the darkness of a terrible foreboding; and at the end, they choose the more somber bliss of renunciation.

Thiess's most recent novel, *Der Leibhaftige*, is concerned with characters whom life has made less noble than the protagonists of *Die Verdammten*. Caspar Müller, the modest incumbent of the titular designation, is a baser and more purposeful scoundrel than Wedekind's Marquis von Keith, with little of the charm and none of the joyousness of his illustrious prototype. Caspar is rather a victim than a representative of his age. The son of an academy professor and of a woman of the lesser nobility, he finds the circumstances of his birth too narrow to contain his exuberant ambition. Neither does the legal career for which he is being trained appear to offer him a tangible or immediate escape. He at first determines to become an actor, but a short term on the stage shows him that satisfaction is not to be achieved by that road. If he must act, he can act with greater success, and with more substantial rewards, in the drawing-room. So he embarks upon his miserable career as a social parasite. Good-looking, affable, absolutely cynical, unrestrained by any delicacy of sentiment or conscience, and devoid of the slightest capacity to love, he is superbly equipped

for the conquest of life. At first, he covets but two ideals: to live elegantly at the expense of the world, and to escape work. For a time, he succeeds in both in a masterly fashion; and, save for a few flattened purses and a few bruised hearts, no harm is done thereby. But at length he falls into the hands of blackguards more clever than himself, and passes from simple depravity to actual crime. The episodes multiply, each descent taking him to a deeper abyss than the one before, until he becomes the agent of an ingeniously masked international love-cult, which exists as a sort of wholesale clearing-house of prostitution. The nets which he lays with such subtle dexterity at length overwhelm him; but Caspar is of the elect of the earth: his very unscrupulousness renders him invulnerable, and his "cork waistcoat" brings him bobbing again to the surface of the turbulent waters in which he has involved his destiny. The end of the novel leaves him, as we know he will always remain throughout his life, scot-free, and anxiously peering about him from beneath his half-closed eyelids.

Der Leibhaftige is one of the four segments of Thiess's proposed composite picture of contemporary German society. In this difficult project, the German writer departs from the necessarily confined procedure of Proust and Rolland, and reverts, with a difference, to the plan of Balzac. It is clearly apparent from the first volume that we have here to deal with, not a portraitist of eccentric personalities, but a social prophet of passionately serious purposes, who aims at nothing less than the concentration of an epoch in a group of well contrasted, typical characters. Whereas Rolland follows a single tumultuous

protagonist through Europe, and Proust minutely studies another in his reactions to a certain social group, Thiess diversifies his types, settings, and influences with each novel, even confusing their sequence as the separate volumes appear. Thus, in *Der Leibhaftige*, we were first shown the semi-symbolical protagonist in his young manhood. In the second novel of the series, *Das Tor zur Welt*, he is described at adolescence. The story of childhood, which will become the first volume in the finished sequence, and the concluding volume, significantly entitled *Die Feuersäule*, since it is apparently to be a sort of pean of modern idealism, are still to appear.

If modern German literature has produced a more engaging picture of adolescence than *Das Tor zur Welt*, we have not read it. The narrative is simplicity itself. It is merely a detailed description of a group of thoroughly normal German youths of high-school age, brought together in a typical small German gymnasium town. It is a diffuse and meandering narrative, with no central plot worthy of the designation, and lent continuity only by the author's very certain sense of composition, and by the gradual unfolding of the young lives which the novel describes. The only highlight in the story is an adolescent love episode which gradually develops in the book, a little jewel of a story, so delicate in both its emotional and verbal exposition that it is paying a high compliment indeed to a neglected novelist to say that, in its quality, it remotely recalls Georg Hermann. The well-known pangs of adolescence, in which we have never been quite able to believe, are graciously absent from Thiess's narrative, which takes its place in his proposed sequence as a

vivid and truthful description of the morally healthy and mentally alert German youth of to-day, as he awakens to a sense of his inheritance of life and idealism.

The three short stories collected under the title of *Der Kampf mit dem Engel* are closer in flavor to *Der Leibhaftige* than to *Das Tor zur Welt*. These stories are studies of character, focused upon those mysterious points where the commonplace facts of existence come into violent collision with life's hidden forces. In this sense, they exemplify a mystical preoccupation which has remained very real to many German creative artists since the Middle Ages, which has been passed up superficially to the modern world in the tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann, and, in our own day, infinitely deepened and impregnated by such productions as Hauptmann's *Der Ketzer von Soana* and Werfel's *Bocksgesang*. As stories, these narratives are not very successful. It is apparent that the novelist's natural disaffinity with the shorter form has disastrously confined him, and the result is a certain disagreeable lack of balance altogether unworthy of so finished a craftsman as Frank Thiess. For the sake of the richness of the characterizations and descriptions, and for the imaginative comprehension of life which they contain, all three of these stories deserve to be rewritten in the more hospitable form of the short novel. Yet, indifferent and half-muted as these stories undoubtedly are, the impression which a discriminating reader will most certainly take from the book is a vigorous recognition of Frank Thiess's preëminence among the younger fiction writers of Germany.

The picture which Frank Thiess gives us of Germany in the period when she was left dazed, exhausted, and

uncomprehending by the tragic blow of defeat after so many hopes and so many sacrifices, is a terrible one. But in those awful days, a certain spark, which through the ages had lain at the roots of the national consciousness, was fanned into flame. The Gethsemane of war and defeat has certainly ennobled large branches of German literature, and what it will ultimately accomplish for Germany, only the future can tell. There is more than an accidental significance in the great wave of religious mysticism which is today penetrating every department of German life. In the shock of despair, in the absolute hopelessness of renunciation, in the *ὄργασμός* of liberated hatred or lust, a new element comes into being, higher and more strange than any that the mundane flesh surmises. This point of mysterious meeting, where the earthly joins for a moment with the divine and derives a new strength from the impact, which the Greeks knew and the medieval diabolists sought after, a small group of German writers seem to discern at the end of a different road. It is the confidence of this vague recompense which gives them the courage needful to face the present, for it promises that, out of the basest frenzies of the tormented flesh, the highest earthly beauty may yet be born.

MAURICE BARRÈS

IF, in 1923, one had asked an average intelligent Frenchman who among his contemporaries most perfectly represented the great tradition of French prose, Anatole France, Pierre Loti, and Maurice Barrès would undoubtedly have been named. Now all of these masters are dead, and so many more besides that one is shocked to contemplate the grievous mortality of the last few years; and the French prose tradition, abandoned to the caprices of modernism, has taken its last sanctuary in the style of Henri de Régnier and Charles Maurras. Had the question been put somewhat differently, to a more discerning intelligence: who, among modern prose writers, is the most French; who has brought to literature gifts ultimately the most valuable, and to his people, the richest and most significant spiritual bequests—then, perhaps, only Maurice Barrès could have been named. For, however often and however perversely he may have been mistaken, however arrogantly he has confined his audience to the narrow circle of the intellectual élite, Maurice Barrès is one of the most aspiring and honest thinkers, and the most brilliant stylist who has arisen in France in the time of our remembrance.

What, then, are the qualities which have gained for Maurice Barrès so unique a place in the esteem of his countrymen, and what the shortcomings which have so sharply limited his reception abroad? They are identical. Barrès, with his lean, Saracen face, so like Pascal's; with his delicate frame and his long, nervous hands, represents,

above all things, the French intelligence in the ultimate, most highly perfected, and most neurasthenic period of its development. The initial premise of his intellectual attitude is singularly, almost exclusively, French. His evolution from the egoism of the individual to the egoism of the traditional community, which, at first view, appears astounding and contradictory, has its basis in a perfectly logical process of casuistic reasoning which, in its gradual development, exposes the whole character of the man's intellectual and spiritual quality. But the Anglo-Saxon mind, with its habitual directness, its precise succession of ideas, and its aversion to all mysticism, often does not follow, and more seldom admires, what to the French intellect, with its contrary tendency to abstractions and subtle distinctions, appears as eminently lucid, reasonable, and fine. This inveterate Gallicism of thought, even more than the exclusively French preoccupation and direction of his work, has isolated the public of Maurice Barrès well within the national boundaries which he has himself so jealously marked against intruders.

For this stout Lorrain, who, in the lineaments of his countenance and mind, so curiously resembles those Arab invaders with whose stock his native province was anciently infiltrated, comprehends the very genius of France. Born on the 22nd of December 1862, at Charmes-sur-Moselle (Vosges), he came to the age of first understanding amid the horrors of invasion and the smart of a terrible defeat which plunged a whole generation into the abyss of cynicism, despair, and negation. He writes:

"The memory which dominates my childhood is that of the events of 1870. I was eight years old when the war broke

out. First of all, I saw convoys of French soldiers pass by. For lack of room, the men were put on the roofs of the carriages when the inside was full, and the poor wretches were scorched by the burning August sun. Wine in plenty was brought to them, although most of them were already drunk. Some time afterwards, hidden in a hay cart, I witnessed the lamentable rout of Du Faily's army corps, defeated at Froeschviller. The regiments were driven back in disorder and blocked the road to such an extent that I was forced to remain in my hay cart all day. They were ordered to encamp in a meadow near Charmes.

"At home, we had some officers dining with us. I was not allowed to appear at table, for the sight of a child might have been yet another sorrow to these defeated men. But I could not resist watching through the door when the dishes were brought in, and I saw how emaciated my parents' guests were.

"The soldiers left in disorder before daybreak, for it was reported that the Prussians were rapidly advancing. Some days later, the Prussians arrived and occupied Charmes, conducting themselves in their usual manner. They compelled the notables of the town to climb up on the engines, as hostages, so that, in the event of an attack, they would be massacred at the first shot. I remember how the Prussians forced us to put lights in our windows every night, to prevent fire being opened upon them. These illuminations had nothing festive about them, for they often lit up tragic scenes. All gatherings had been forbidden, and the sentinels, in their zeal, shot even isolated passers-by. Sometimes they would fire at our windows, through the doors, or into the cellar windows.

"Yes, they indeed committed atrocities, and for this reason, there is not a single anti-militarist in Lorraine. The Prussians are still our most obvious and determined enemies, the enemies who are never absent from our thought.

"Their occupation, which was very long, for it lasted from the outbreak of the war until the complete liberation of the territory, left a deep impression on my childish mind, and one which I put to a prompt employment, since I was elected Nationalist deputy at the age of twenty-five years. The memory

of the unfortunate heroes of Froeschviller and Reichschoffen commanded me to fight for the French cause on every field."

"My early childhood," Barrès writes, "was spent at Strasbourg and in Alsace, as well as at Charmes and in Lorraine. When I was three years old, I was sent to a religious institution, where the good sisters could not do enough to spoil me. I was often taken to Strasbourg Cathedral, and the hours I spent in that mystic atmosphere left many very happy impressions in my mind." Barrès's Catholicism, which he was to return to as a socio-philosophical principle after the first hauteur of his egoism had exhausted itself, was as inherent within him as the militant patriotism of the Lorrain. A third powerful influence in his early thought is the German philosophy with which his mind was drenched in the years when, at the lycée of Nancy, he attended the lectures of Burdeau, whom, under the name of Bouteiller, he has exposed to such bitter censure in *Les Déracinés*. In common with the chief writers of his century, Barrès was so deeply penetrated by German Romantic philosophy that it is difficult to discriminate, in the ideas which he afterwards developed, between the impulses which derive remotely in the philosophy of Kant and Hegel and those which have their origin in the profound decisions of his essential patriotism. His evolution from individualism to collectivism curiously parallels the similar evolution of Fichte. This elusive, but nevertheless fundamental, element in Barrès's nationalistic thought is a piquant comment upon chauvinism in general, for, offensive as the Nationalists find the idea, the richer sap of German thought had colored French thought from the period of

Rousseau and Madame de Staël, through that of Michelet, Proudhon, Taine, and Renan, until it came to its apotheosis in the philosophy of Henri Bergson.

When Maurice Barrès went to Paris, in 1883, he was already the author of several articles which had been published in *La Jeune France*, and the recipient of some encouragement from Anatole France and Leconte de Lisle, whom Allenet, the editor, had interested in his work. Barrès was of the solid upper-bourgeois provincial stock. His mother was a pure Lorrain, and his father—the son of one of the “grognards” of Napoleon I., who was taken by the Germans as a hostage in 1870 and had died of maltreatment while in their hands—came originally from Auvergne. Brought up in the twin shadows of defeat and of the Categorical Imperative to a keen sense of his social obligation of usefulness, he had already persevered for three years in the study of law. In Paris, however, and encouraged by the interest of two such eminent writers, Barrès promptly abandoned the career for which his father had destined him and, in 1884, began publishing a review of his own. *Les Taches d'Encre* appeared irregularly and survived little more than a year. Similarly short-lived was Barrès's second journalistic venture, *Les Chroniques*, which he launched in 1886, in collaboration with Charles Le Goffic. Yet these two desperately serious, half-fledged, youthful exploits proved of the greatest value, not alone in asserting Barrès's right to be heard, but in lending him the substantial journalistic foundation which relieves the excessive preciosity of his work, reconciles its discrepancies, and causes even the slight articles which, during the war, he wrote almost daily for *L'Echo de Paris* to find their mark with in-

fallible accuracy. In a word, they helped to make Maurice Barrès, in spite of everything else that he was and represented, one of the most distinguished, capable, and active journalists of France.

Fame came easily to Maurice Barrès. Late in 1888, at the age of twenty-six, he published his first book, *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares*, a strange and passionate production, full of pride, full of self-searching, and charged with Horatian disdain of the vulgar; the masterpiece of what he himself terms "une prodigieuse susceptibilité cérébrale." A few months later, an admiring article by Paul Bourget, in *Le Journal des Débats*, made the book a sensation among the "haute intelligence française" whom, from the first, the young writer had addressed as his special audience. *Sous l'Oeil des Barbares*, with *L'Homme Libre*, which was published in the following year, and *Le Jardin de Bérénice*, published in 1891, form the trilogy of *Le Culte du Moi*, in which Barrès has developed the first phase of his philosophical egoism. "Metaphysical novels," as Barrès has called them, these are books without plot, with little incident and but slender continuity, wherein the author follows his hero-counterpart through a course similar to that which he himself had gone—his early life in a provincial lycée, where his young intellect is filled with the dangerous soporifics of Romanticism and Kant; the period of desperate quest which follows, when the ancient sentiments of patriotism and religion have been destroyed and nothing offered to fill the void that they have left; the intense suffering to which this moral disorientation and, above all, the insolent intrusions of commonplace life, submit him; his attempts to achieve integrity by sequestering his

spirit in an ivory tower of egoistic idealism which the "barbarians" of the outside world may not violate; the imperious desire for action and service which will not allow him to take his ease in this fictitious Nirvanâ, and his various efforts to find a tenable middle ground in the employments of politics, travel, and love.

Herein is implicit the contradiction which caused Taine to say of Barrès, at the beginning of his career, that "this young man will never do anything worth while, for he is impelled by two tendencies absolutely opposed, a taste for meditation and a desire for action." Barrès had need of his ivory tower as a secure refuge against a world which too often wounded and disgusted him. But, like a medieval chevalier "sans peur et sans reproche," he likewise had a very great need to keep his armor bright and his sword in hand, and to find righteous causes which he might champion. So, after having isolated himself, with apparent finality, behind the barricade of intellectual refusal formed by *Le Culte du Moi*, he seemingly fled to the opposite extreme by entering politics. In 1889, he stood for deputy for Nancy, so desperately young that half the good folk fancied that he was electioneering for his father; and, after a hotly contested campaign, in the course of which he was almost killed by a mob, was elected. He was rejected in 1893, but in 1906 was elected for Paris to the seat in the Chamber which he continued to hold up to the time of his death. Also in 1906, he was elected by the French Academy to the seat of José-Maria de Hérédia. The nationalistic phase of this egoist whom Bourget was to term "the most efficacious present servitor of France the Eternal" had thus early begun.

The process of metaphysical digestion which took

Maurice Barrès from the Cult of Self to the Cult of Nationalism is, to the Anglo-Saxon mind, very curious. It does not, as it at first appears, involve the contradiction or adulteration of any of Barrès's original principles. It is merely a development from the simple to the complex, from the generalization of the first-person-singular to the emphatic assertion of the first-person-plural, based on an ideology essentially French, and in this instance, considerably emphasized by the circumstance that it took place in the mind of a Lorrain who had witnessed the events of 1870. "Every living being," he writes, in *L'Appel au Soldat*, "is born of a race, a soil, an atmosphere, and genius manifests itself only in proportion as it is linked with its land and its dead." In his celebrated reply to René Doumic, he adds: "Having thought out at great length the idea of the Ego, with no other methods than that of the great poets and mystics, I descended among shifting sands until I found, at the bottom, collectivity as a support."

So, in observing the transition of Maurice Barrès from the disdainful egoist of *Le Culte du Moi* to the passionate, almost bigoted, traditionalist of *Le Roman de l'Énergie Nationale*, the fact that this evolution came about quite naturally must be understood. Barrès had seen that the individual is not entire within himself; that he is the product of his race, of his society, and of the accumulated traditions, customs, and beliefs which have shaped this race and this society throughout the ages. "Je sais un instant d'une chose immortelle," he writes. He had seen that, in estranging himself from the living stream which had produced him, he isolated himself from the sources which nourished his native genius, and that he thus

arbitrarily confined his spirit within the smallest portion of the great structure of which it remained a part, whether it would or not. He had noted, moreover, that the need for action and for service was imperative within him, so that his spirit languished if it were left too long in the inert seclusion of its ivory tower. So Barrès accepted his race and, extending the principles of his original egoism in a consecutive line to encompass it, arrived at the cult of Nationalism, wherein he conceives his nation as an expression of himself, so complete, so final, and so clairvoyant, that the opposing ambitions of the individual, smaller ego may be unhesitatingly sacrificed to it, in the assurance of a still higher consummation.

The exact premise of Barrès's nationalistic ambition is defined in the transitional *L'Ennemi des Lois*. Against the screen of German Socialism, the symbolical protagonist analyzes the value of traditions and the general aims of the would-be reformers of society. What he sees only disgusts him, for he finds that all of this revolutionary energy tends only to materialistic objects. "Give us something that will change the heart of man," he cries. "It is a state of mind, and not laws, that the world demands—a moral, not a material, reform." To the high task of creating this state of mind in France, Maurice Barrès devoted the best of his genius. The trilogies of *Le Roman de l'Energie Nationale* and *Les Bastions de l'Est* (including respectively *Les Déracinés*, *L'Appel au Soldat* and *Leurs Figures*; *Les Amitiés Françaises*, *Au Service de l'Allemagne* and *Colette Baudouche*) are testaments of the national spirit, such as will not be produced again in this generation.

Barrès yielded himself to the decisions of tradition

like a passionate woman, with a rapt completeness which would appear almost fanatical, if it had not a great deal of intelligence and something of sublimity in it. An egoist, he became a French citizen, and more: he became a Lorrain, since the national genius centers for each individual in the province of his birth. He opposed Dreyfus, supported Boulanger, and championed the Government in the Panama scandal, not because he believed in his position, but because he felt that national policy required him to do so. A skeptic, he became reconciled with Catholicism; and it was to preserve from ruin the ancient religious shrines of the provinces that he wrote one of his most beautiful books, *La Grande Pitié des Églises de France*. Even in those marvelous travel records which contain so much of the fineness of his sensibility and so much of the extraordinary beauty of his style, *Le Voyage de Sparte, Greco ou le Secret de Tolède, Du Sang, de la Volupté et de la Mort, Amori et Dolori Sacrum: La Mort de Venise* and *Une Enquête aux Pays du Levant*, he carries France in his heart and sees and feels as a Lorrain. There is hardly a modern writer to whom the consciousness of his own and of his national identity are so inextricably mingled as to Maurice Barrès, who thought of France as a lover, fascinated at seeing the adored image in that of his race, and agitated by every blemish which, to his anxious eyes, troubled its perfection.

In this sense, the articles which Barrès wrote during the war for *L'Echo de Paris* (collected in the ten volumes of the series *L'Âme Française et la Guerre*) constitute a sort of sublimation in action of all his ideas. In these articles, written in the time of national peril, in response to a public necessity, Barrès achieves his desire of serv-

ice and, in a singular sense, of oneness with his people, in striving for a great and necessary end. After the war, he continued his work as a militant publicist in his Strasbourg lectures on *Le Génie du Rhin*, advocating scientific preparedness for a coming war; and occupied himself with educational problems, in studying the French administration in the Levant, and in building up a system of rapprochement with Germany to take the place of the old agitation for the revanche. Meanwhile, he proved, by writing such an admirable romantic novel as *Un Jardin sur l'Oronte*, that his prodigious activity as a publicist during and after the war had in no wise diminished his literary genius. Maurice Barrès died, in the midst of his labors, on the 4th of December 1923, the day on which *Une Enquête aux Pays du Levant* was published.

Literary critics and the political colleagues of Maurice Barrès have long deplored, each from his particular prejudice, the duality of the great egoist's nature, which prevented him from occupying himself with either of his disparate pursuits to the exclusion of the other. The authors of these lamentations leave out of account two important facts: first, that this duality of his activities was imposed by the corresponding duality of Barrès's nature, which required the exaltation of service equally with the pleasures of literary creation, and would have remained unfulfilled, had either need been denied; and second, that this duality-in-action was exceptionally complete, inasmuch as his valuable achievements in the one art distinctly contributed to, or at least did not hamper, his valuable achievements in the other. His was an intellect capable of spanning enormous distances. Why statesman-

ship and the pursuit of literature should be so violently opposed in the popular mind, one cannot guess. In America, where intelligence is as irredeemable a defect politically as Catholicism, one can understand it; but these matters are better ordered in France. By any criterion, however, Maurice Barrès contributed more than enough, alike to French literature and to French Nationalism, to keep his memory green beyond his generation.

BORIS PILNIAK

IN that fiercely biased criticism of the writers of Soviet Russia, *Literatura i Revolutzia*, Leon Trotzky severely arraigns Boris Pilniak upon many counts of political and artistic evasion. Trotzky's accusations are, to be sure, dogmatic, and he presses them with an emphasis which rather engages our sympathies for his unfortunate subject than seduces our judgment against him. But his objections, in the main, are well founded. There is cause for the esthetic apprehension which admirers of the Russian genius feel in contemplating this stuttering verbal cyclone; and there is cause for Trotzky's political chagrin. And thus it appears that the most conspicuous member of the little band who have lately arisen to express, in their fiction, the character and ideals of Soviet Russia, is, in fact, not a Bolshevist innovator at all, but a realist properly stemming from the main stream of the Russian classic tradition; that, far from being a force of astounding originality, he is so prone to imitation that he barely escapes the reproach of plagiarism; and that he is fundamentally so conservative in his political instincts that the most acute publicist of the Revolution openly warns him lest the logical development of his present attitudes should ultimately set him against the very Russia which he now celebrates as an infant titan of prodigious birth and limitless destiny.

Trotzky's premise is, of course, dictated by the urgent political necessities of the new State. Trotzky is a com-

munist and a politician. He sees his nation at the first triumph of a social movement as tremendous as the Reformation, with its ultimate fate still suspended precariously in the balance, and menaced by the armed hand of the very world whose saviour it hopes presently to become. Thus, in the new nation's perilous infancy, he would press every force into the service of its vindication and its survival. In the Russia of Trotzky, there is no time now for art; there is justification only for actively constructive forces. While this situation remains, those who will not lend their art to the service of propaganda, or who permit any reservations to obstruct their complete allegiance to the communist ideal, are simply traitors. But Pilniak is neither a communist nor a politician, nor yet even a pamphleteer. He is an artist, excited by the rapture of being alive in the epoch of such a tremendous event, and very much engaged by the singular contrasts which it has produced. He exults at beholding Russia in what appears to him as "a beautiful agony of birth." Yet one feels that he does so, not from conviction, but merely because he is of the Revolutionary generation, because the spectacle pleases him esthetically, and because there is nothing else to do about it. Certainly he is not a Bolshevik. The Workers' Revolution interests him but little, and it is clear that he does not understand all that it signifies. At heart, Pilniak remains, as he has always been, an instinctive anarchist.

The October Revolution is a workers' movement, localized in the great cities, Moscow and Petrograd. But to this major, identifying, communist phase of the Revolution, Pilniak is indifferent. To him, its colors are drab, its excesses commonplace. Like all the great realists of the

past, Pilniak believes that it is only in the heart of the peasant that the artist or the seer shall ever find Russia. So, in all his tales, he writes of the peasants, of rural communities, of rustic affairs, envisaging the Revolution, not as a modern social movement, but as a logical culmination of the hundreds of peasant revolts which in turn gave their martyrs to the gallows and to the Siberian mines and their paragraphs to the dark annals of the Empire. The People alone exist for Boris Pilniak; the People who, try as the local Soviets may to fit them into the ordered scheme of the System, remain Oblomovs, serene and amiable, but utterly uncomprehending and indifferent.

Yet Boris Pilniak is not himself a native Russian. He was born in 1894, of German descent, at Kolomna, Razan, the scene of his novel, *Mashiny i Volki*. His real name is Boris Andreyovich Wogau. Nevertheless, like many another Russo-German and Russo-Frenchman, he has become the most Russian of all the Russians. His childhood and his youth were spent at Kolomna, and his "higher" education he received in the Moscow Commercial Institute. His literary work before the war was confined to a few inconsequential short stories, chiefly imitations of Bunin. The shock of the Revolution was required to galvanize his talent. In the first year of the Revolution, Pilniak wrote nothing. That was "Goly God," the bare year, the year of starvation and hopeless misery. In that terrible famine year, Pilniak suffered with his countrymen, wandering as in a nightmare from town to town in the general quest of food, and living ever at the moment of death. Then, in the summer of 1918, he began to write of all that he had seen and suffered and dreamed—his

short stories of the Revolutionary character and situation, and his two great novels.

Pilniak's stories were published in various periodicals and, in 1920, collected in his first volume, *Bylyo*—"That Which Has Happened." This event, of such great importance in the history of the new Soviet literature, passed at that time unnoticed. But Pilniak was definitely launched on his career. At Moscow, he had assisted in the organization of a small literary group devoted to the study of the works of the Russian modernists, and through this affiliation he had already found a few admirers and some encouragement. After the publication of *Bylyo*, he became acquainted with that indefatigable Maecenas of the younger Russian writers, Maxim Gorky, with whom he lived at Petrograd during the period when his masterpiece, *Goly God*, was in its preparatory stages. Little by little, his fame grew. In 1922, when his second collection of short stories, *Ivan da Marya*, seemed to catch and repeat for the first time the actual spirit of the Revolutionary society and became the reigning literary sensation of the hour, Boris Pilniak arose to significance as the foremost interpreter of that spirit and its first authentic voice in literature.

Pilniak's two earliest collections of short stories, *Bylyo* and *Ivan da Marya*, contain the germs of all that later came to flourish in outlandish bloom in his two great epics of the Revolution, *Goly God* and *Mashiny i Volki*. One notes at once that Pilniak writes as an observer of these events, and not as a participant; that his human and esthetic sympathies are with the peasants, and not with the workers; that, although he supports the Revolution, he is at heart an anarchist, and far removed from the

Bolshevist point of view. One notes also that, as a mocking-bird of literature, he makes Stevenson appear, by contrast, as a very zealot of originality. He has borrowed the dialectical virtuosity of his style from Aleksei Remisov; its typographical idiosyncrasies and its pseudo-philosophical accent from Andrey Biely. His skepticism derives from Chekhov, and his treatment of sex from Rozanov and Aleksei Tolstoy. His debt to Ivan Bunin is likewise great. His major fiction is one long variation of Biely's great tour-de-force, the novel *Petrograd*. It represents, as Prince Mirsky somewhat cruelly remarks, "a sort of epitome of modern Russian fiction, a living literary history."

These allegiances, as Trotzky complains, link Pilniak to a past which a proper Revolutionary should have long since repudiated; but the complete divorcement which the Red prophet requires is unthinkable. Pilniak, in company with those of his contemporaries whom Trotzky patronizingly terms the "fellow-travelers" of the Revolution, has repudiated the whole technique and a large portion of the spirit of classic Russian fiction. He has gone artistically as far to the Left as it is possible for him to go, without becoming a mere eccentric or a downright propagandist. One feels that he has done these things, not for a political ideal, but because he has seen the necessities of Russian art alter with the rending of the Russian social fabric; and, from the remoteness of another land and language, we can better applaud this motive than its alternative. For the Volga and the Neva still flow to the sea as before the cataclysm, and the Kremlin lifts its selfsame Byzantine towers above the mummy of Lenin as above the catafalques of the Tsars. There is a point

beyond which a literature cannot cut itself off from its main stream without depriving itself of the invigorating sap of the national substance. Trotzky would designate that point as the October Revolution, but Trotzky is a statesman. Pilniak, the artist, sets it at about 1904, thus linking the present revolutionary epoch with the revolutionary epoch which gave it birth. And in the same way, in his mind and in his art, he links the Workers' Revolution with the peasant struggles of two hundred years, insisting that the spirit which found its ultimate vindication in the October uprising is not as singular or as modern as Trotzky pretends, but represents the explosion of long accumulated resentments and the consummation of an ancient passion for freedom.

Pilniak was already at work on *Goly God* during his residence with Gorky in 1920; the last book of the novel was written at Kolomna and London in 1923-1924. Thus, although he published many short stories between the date of the conception of his masterpiece and that of its completion, it is apparent that Pilniak is not a facile artist, but a diligent and conscientious craftsman. *Goly God*, as we have observed, is a description of the famine year of 1918-1919. The scene is a small provincial city, Ordynin, which takes its name from the principal family of the place. There we see, mixed in a frantic medley and united alone by their common suffering, all the elements of the new Russia—the Ordynins, decayed and divided, going their several ways to destruction; the peasants, "still living in the Stone Age," their eyes turned in indolent adoration toward the past and utterly dazed and helpless before the sudden shifting of immediate events; the Bolshevist commissars, the "Leather Jackets,"

brusque, active, and arrogantly confident of the future. We see them all as Fate has molded them, in their fundamental separateness, the superstition of the peasants contrasting the materialism of their new masters, anarchy contrasting communism, and the two finding a common basis only in death, starvation, drunkenness, and sexual excess.

There is no plot, no unity of place or time, almost no coherence, in the novel. The protagonists are the classes—the peasants, the workers, and the bourgeoisie—who may be represented, from time to time, by any of their members. The theme is the contrast of these classes in the flux of the new order, and the action moves hither and there, into the present, the past, and the future, losing itself and finding itself again, or not finding itself at all, as chance and its creator will it—even as, in the bare year, those derelicts of life passed one another and were lost to view, like ships in a troubled night. Like the society which it annotates, the novel is tortured, diffuse, and unfinished. It ends without a true conclusion, and on the title page of the book appears the legend: "Volume One," as if to emphasize the necessarily unfinished state of this picture of a transitional society.

It is improbable that a second volume of *Goly God* was ever intended. Yet *Mashiny i Volki* appears as a direct continuation of the earlier narrative, inasmuch as it presents another exactly similar segment of the same society, at a further point of its development to the new order. The Kolomna of *Mashiny i Volki* is very like the Ordynin of *Goly God*, and its people are identical. The style is as violent and as vivid, and the abrupt transitions are but hardly relieved by the artifice of interjected notations

from the supposed diary of a simple local historian, who bears the strangely significant name of Ivan Alexandrovich Nepomnyashtchy. The unfinished effect is stressed by the author's use of cross-references throughout the text and of notations for chapter-headings, and by his repeated designation of portions of the book as "fragments."

The story, or rather, the loosely connected anthology of episodes which does service for a plot, centers about the erection of a factory in the town by a Bolshevik commissariat. Pilniak sees this transition from peasant retrogression to Bolshevik progress as a struggle between the wolves and the machines, and as a resurrection more wonderful than that of Lazarus. "Our whole Revolution," he makes one of his characters say, "is elemental, like the wolves." It is clear to which side his sympathy tends, but it is also clear which the more definitely arouses his admiration. In this struggle, the wolf must needs be crushed and the machine emerge triumphant; but out of the Russian past, out of the past of blood and color, the wolf-cry of the great Piotr is still heard in the land. And it will take more than a Soviet manifesto to stifle that cry, or yet to misdirect the impulse of disinterested art in a writer whose instincts are fundamentally as strong and pure as those of Boris Pilniak.

HERMANN BAHR

IF it were true, as Oscar Wilde once said, that good Americans go to Paris when they die, there would be some heretical spirits inclined to dispute the infallible graciousness of Providence. For, after an eon or two, Eternity spent in Paris would become as humdrum as Eternity spent in the frolic of a single fad which multiplies through endless variations. Paris, the paradise of the vacationist and the eager Legionnaire, holds too many perils for one who understands English and Berlitz French. Farther to the south is another city, ravaged as yet only by war, famine, and revolution, which offers her lovers a less exciting but more secure refuge for a sojourn of such infinite duration. There are some good Americans who would contemplate death with greater calm if, instead of stopping off in Paris, they might have their trunks checked through to Vienna.

One's preference in cities is as personal as one's taste in wines, and the reasonable man will cultivate his garden wherever it grows best. Those who admire Paris will find plentiful gratification in the chapters of Hermann Bahr's autobiography, *Selbstbildnis*, wherein this admirable citizen of the world tells of his first visit to the French capital and of the manner in which his acquaintance with the French writers enlarged his understanding of the fundamental conceptions of art and sharpened his critical apprehensions. But to the lover of Vienna, as the city was under the old Empire, the graceful rival of Paris, with

the mellow charm of its society and its art, and its Danube more lovely than the Seine, this book has the eloquence of a veritable testament. The whole flavor of the old city, its art in all its phases, its social personality, its idea, and its ideal, are implicit in the figure of Hermann Bahr, the one-time chronicler and champion of Jung Wien and the lovable martinet of the Café Griensteidl.

Bahr, in his heyday, was an anomaly of the most pernicious description. In the versatility of his talents and the variety of his interests, he may be best compared with James Huneker and Jean Cocteau, although he probably has a more substantial genius than either. In the years before Vienna was considered to possess any respectable literature, Bahr flashed forth like a willful comet. With a mental activity and a versatility alike astounding, he managed to be everywhere at the same time, to see everything more clearly than anyone else, to do everything with a little more than ordinary competence. He was a Jack-of-all-styles, and, being master of all of them, he could not be docketed in any of the ordinary classifications of the literary profession. So Bahr remained, throughout his best years, a sort of artistic freebooter; and, since he found both relish and freedom in his outlawry, he could afford to laugh at the critics who protested that such an unruly talent as his could come to no good.

A mere catalogue of Bahr's activities would be a fearsome document, if carried out in detail. Born in Linz, Austria, on the 19th of July 1863, he was educated in Vienna, Graz, Czernowitz, and Berlin. and at length sent forth into the world, without yet quite having made up his mind whether he wanted to be an actor or a writer.

While at Berlin, he had become interested in the Naturalist movement sponsored by Arno Holz; but after his period of military service, in 1887, he went to Paris, where he became absorbed at first hand in the works and ideas which had influenced his compatriots, and where, above all, he penetrated those subtleties of artistic form which have remained the grace he shares the least with his countrymen. Then he journeyed further abroad, returning to Berlin in 1890, as director of the enterprising periodical of literature and the theater in which his early theatrical criticism first appeared and in which his first novel, *Die Gute Schule*, was published. In 1891, he went to Russia, and in the following year, he settled in Vienna, where his mission of discovering the Austrian artistic consciousness to itself awaited him.

Bahr considered himself, and art in general, with such an amiable lightness that the idea of any "mission" awaiting his performance was probably far from his mind when he turned from Berlin to the more virginal field of his own capital. But upon one sequence of ideas he was desperately serious—that Austria had an artistic destiny of its own, that Vienna might be made the most civilized city in Europe, that Prussia was uncouth and undeserving of leadership, and that the North German contempt of southern culture must be put to shame by substantial achievements. This patriotic faith, in its reiterations, took on the form of an ideal. The Jung Wien movement derived its most decisive form, and such talents as Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler, Altenberg, and Beer-Hofmann their most fruitful appreciation, in Bahr's nightly discourses in the Café Griensteidl. These sessions are justly famous in the chronicles of Jung Wien, for they prove

to what extent a single enthusiast can carry a whole movement. The exordium would begin in the late afternoon, and the peroration would greet the sun of the new day with a clarion call to action. It was a trick which Bahr had learned in Berlin and Paris. But he knew the difference between the talk which begets merely talk and the talk which begets literature; and, under the rebuke or the inspiration of his words, were created masterpieces which he could never himself have written.

Thus, although, in the terms of true greatness, his own creative achievements appear slight and without social or artistic significance, Bahr takes on a unique impressiveness as a creative figure. If force of conviction and the capacity to lead and to inspire may be accounted creative, Bahr is certainly that. If an urbane, mellow, and thoroughly sophisticated critical talent, an incessantly active intellect, which quests everywhere as the swordfish darts, and a fecund literary dexterity, which employs every vehicle with unfailing competence, if without genius, are creative, then Bahr has not fallen short of his less versatile early companions. But German criticism, annoyed by the diversity of his interests and the dexterous postings of his talent, has been inclined rather to write down Bahr as an amazingly clever journalist, than to allow him any rank as a literary figure. It has been more easy simply to ignore such an anomalous talent, for which no established classification exists.

Bahr's career has, indeed, been a perpetual shifting. Shortly after his arrival in Vienna, he established his weekly, *Die Zeit*, which he employed as an organ of the Jung Wien movement, and to which he contributed critiques of literature, painting, modern philosophy, and

the theater. Later, he became a staff critic of the *Wiener Tageblatt* and the *Volks Zeitung*. It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence of Bahr's criticism on a culture which was only then beginning to speak in its own voice. He constituted within himself an advance guard of appreciation and discovery in all the arts. Reading everything, seeing every new play, and attending every exhibition, he recognized and proclaimed his countrymen at their true worth, long before they knew the extent of their own powers. Perfect cosmopolite that he was, he introduced to his readers all that the other cultures of Europe had given him. His incessant search for the true, the vital, the beautiful, and the amusing, lured him into various and exotic paths; but the essential candor and hospitality of his perceptions were never betrayed. Bahr may not have seen deeply into the causes of events nor clearly observed their integrity in the stream of history, but as far as he saw, he saw straight. His performance in writing, at the age of sixty, the pioneer treatise on the most important movement in the art of the new generation, his *Expressionismus*, and in doing it so well that it remains the best work on the subject in any language, vindicates anew the freshness of his mind and the extraordinary rightness of his critical instinct.

It is as a critic that Bahr has exerted his most valuable influence, but it is as a dramatist that he is most widely known and will be the longest remembered. The phenomenal success of his comedy of infidelity, *Der Konzert*, in 1909-1910, coming at the moment when it had become fashionable to depreciate Bahr, not only rehabilitated his reputation, but, in an international sense, established Viennese comedy as securely as the success of Franz

Lehar's *Lustige Witwe* had established Viennese operetta a few years before. All his life, Bahr had been drawn irresistibly to the theater. His first play, *Die Neuen Menschen*, was written when he was twenty-four, and *Der Konzert* was preceded by a long succession of plays—notably *Die Grosse Sünde*, *Die Hausliche Frau*, *Aus der Vorstadt*, *Die Tschaperl*, *Josephine*, *Der Star*, *Der Athlet*, *Wienerinnen*, *Der Franzl*, *Der Apostel*, *Der Meister*, *Der Klub der Erlöser*, *Der Andere* and *Ringelspiel*—all interesting in situation and in the psychological treatment of character, all fairly crackling in the dialogue, all executed with the inscrutable neatness and directness of effect which characterize everything that comes from Bahr's fluent pen. Since then, there have been others, each possessing the same excellences—*Die Kinder*, *Das Tänzchen*, *Das Prinzip*, *Das Phantom*, *Der Querulant*, *Der Muntre Seifensieder* and *Die Stimme*. The man is simply indefatigable. Yet, however closely he has skirted it in each of his works, he appears to have struck the note of true comedy only once, in the play which has already won acceptance as a classic of its kind.

It would be as easy for a friendly critic to overestimate Bahr as it was for his more spiteful contemporaries to underestimate him. He is suspiciously clever. The dexterity of his mind, the variety and contemporaneity of his interests, his general competence, and the persuasiveness of his style, led his early critics to declare, as Pollard remarks in a sympathetic essay, that "as a man of letters he had the gestures of a journalist, as a journalist the gestures of a man of letters." That the quality of his work suffered alike from this fluency and this diversity is indisputable, but, being as he was, what is doubtful is

that he might possibly have done otherwise than he did. Judged as a literary figure, one is forced to give Bahr a rather low rating, or to create for him a special classification. But as a journalist, he is absolutely first-rate, as first-rate as that other steeplejack and diviner of genius, James Huneker. He wrote so consummately for his day that we find ourselves already thinking of him as one who is of the past, although, as *Selbstbildnis* proves, his eye is as clear as ever and his hand has lost none of its cunning.

Bahr's autobiography, *Selbstbildnis*, is, in a sense, the crowning journalistic tour-de-force of his career. In this volume, Bahr describes the whole busy panorama of his life—his youth, his school-days, his diverse acquaintance, his swiftly changing interests, his aspiration for Austrian culture and its eventual defeat, the history and personae of the artistic groups of his beloved Vienna. But he writes of his life as he would write of some joyous, robust adventure. His narrative is a reflection of surface experiences which, one feels, have left the depths untouched. Even such episodes as the disruption of the Empire and his own return to the Roman Catholic faith are recalled with no more poignant inner emphasis than as if they had happened to another person. So, to the last, Hermann Bahr declines to remove the mask of his superficiality. One knows from such passages as his comparisons of the Austrian writers with the German, and the German with the French, how acute his psychological observation really is; and one can observe in his plays the true richness of his human sentiment. Yet, at the point where the man of letters opens his heart to all beholders, Bahr

buttons his coat and tells his own version of the story—a version distinctly “for publication.” He remains, to the end, what he has always been—the incorrigible, brilliant, diabolically clever journalist, with a touch of pure genius—but only a touch.

PIERRE LOUYS

IF one might, without fear of being torn limb from limb for his temerity, advance a moralistic conjecture as a sort of tentative hypothesis for critical speculation, one might suggest that the element which makes the poetry of the ancient Greeks more poignant than that of our contemporaries, and the lower animals more noble than men, is the apprehension, shared by both, of tragedy—that is, of the ultimate extinction that dwells at the roots of all earthly beauty. There are certain points of view essential to this fundamental attitude to life which have been submerged in the unmeditative haste and the complexity of the modern world, and which we will never quite recapture until, in some distant age, the perfection of our sophistication shall return us again to the original simplicity. Meanwhile, we make it the consistent tenet of our philosophy to ignore the deepest fact of life, while we search out the less disturbing truthlets.

Yet, it is in part to verify the intuitive remnant of this original sentiment of death in life that we return to the Greeks, who, being pagan, could stand upright in the presence of death. Our modern bards of death cannot speak to our spirit. They are merely pessimists or sentimentalists, cringing, abashed, or hypocritical before the miracle of the great release. To the upright of heart, any permanent pessimism is as impossible as is sentimentality to a well-organized intellect. The poet has perceived, if he has observed the processes of Nature with unclouded

eyes, that all the pursuits and achievements of life are ultimately empty, except insofar as they may enrich his own spirit or alleviate, to some slight degree, the burdens of his fellows: that all beauty is betrothed to decay; that every mortal event is meaningless when measured by the scale of eternity; and that every path of life ends at the skiff of Charon. But this discovery of his destiny does not necessarily embitter him. The brevity of life rather reveals to him the splendor of its moments, and the doom of his hopes inspires him to cherish within himself the only beauty which can transcend mortality and, remaining permanent and indestructible in the face of time, is alone worth the dignity of effort.

The conception of life as a sentient interval between two mute eternities is the element which makes Oriental philosophy profound, and the absence of which has left Occidental philosophy shallow. The pre-Sokratic philosophy of Greece was extremely rich, in the Oriental sense. The Greek tragic spirit is expressed, in its original essence, in such philosophy as that of Hegesias the Cyrenaic; hardly at all in the philosophy of Plato. Whatever our prejudices, it is necessary, from time to time, to set aside all extraneous considerations and to contemplate life as in the void, for thus alone can we estimate the brevity and littleness which are its veritable challenge. The thing which appears to us as noble, when we observe it in the Greek tragic poets, is their ability to visualize the march of all things to death, directly, without bitterness, and without the impediments of sentimentality, inherited preconceptions, or moral cowardice. Then, more subtly, we perceive that the melic poets contemplate beauty and love with the same sense of their eventual

destiny. And in our hearts, although all the refinements and evasions of civilization and the blandishments of modern philosophy combine to cloud our perceptions, we know that the Greeks spoke truly.

The prevailing scholarly grudge against classical revivals is justified, if for no better reason than that we are ourselves, that we are moderns, and that our faces ought of right to be set to the front. But if, by turning again to the past, we could free ourselves of the muck of sentimentality and regain something of the unrightness, the breadth, and the honest beauty of the Ancients, the anachronism would be in a good cause. The numerous Neo-Grecian revivals in European poetry have done little to give man remembrance of his portion in the scheme of things, but they have done much to resuscitate and invigorate the forms of poetry. In almost every age and country touched by the Greek spirit, poetry has returned for a new lease of life to the Hellenic springs, at the time when it has been most corrupted by the weeds of Romanticism and Decadence; and it has never returned without profit. In recent French literature, we have had the Parnassian revival, begun in 1850 when Théophile Gautier published his *Emaux et Camées* and, through half a century of literary idealism, influencing scores of poets, notably Sully Prudhomme, Leconte de Lisle, François Coppée, José-Maria de Hérédia, Stéphane Mallarmé in his first phase, and, the Symbolists, Henri de Régnier, Albert Samain, Catulle Mendès, and Paul Verlaine. Through the many dissimilar currents in French poetry after the Romantic movement, this Hellenic stream flowed, at times almost imperceptibly, until it emerged

again in the Neo-Parnassian revival, which interrupted Decadence in the last years of the nineteenth century and achieved a certain glory in the versatile genius of Anatole France, in the prose of Rémy de Gourmont and Juliette Adam, and in the whole personality of Pierre Louÿs.

The reputation of Pierre Louÿs suffers unfortunately and unfairly from the peculiar notoriety of his masterpieces. The author of *Aphrodite* and *Les Chansons de Bilitis* is not a carnalist, but, in spirit and in fact, one of the purest Hellenists of our generation. Those who are distracted by the moralities may gain an antidote in the dialogues of Athenaeus and Lucian, wherein the actual intellectual and social situation of the Greek hetairai is indicated. For the rest, we have to remember that proper Hellenism is not merely an imitation of the classic forms, but an effort toward a revision of perspective, toward a new orientation, toward that singular hardness and refinement of style and thought that is best represented by the Greeks. We do not mean to say that the preoccupation of Pierre Louÿs with sensuality is accidental, or even incidental, for it not only penetrates every figure of his work, but is inseparable from it. We would, however, suggest that the work of art might, in this case, be judged with profit apart from the incidental designation of its subject. "Sensuality is the condition, mysterious but necessary and creative, of intellectual development," Louÿs writes, in his preface to *Aphrodite*; and, according to Prodikos of Keos, the text which Saint Basil used most often to commend to Christian meditation was that of "Herakles between Virtue and Voluptuousness." Sensuality is therefore the point of departure from which

the art of Pierre Louÿs draws its chief inspiration. Apart from this circumstance, it remains notably competent merely as art.

Pierre Louÿs lived, in a sense, the perfect life of an artist. He was born in Paris, in 1870, of an excellent, but not particularly impressive family. He was the great-nephew of General Junot, Duc d'Abrantès, and a descendant of Baron Louis, the celebrated finance minister of the Restoration. His great-grandfather was Sabatier, Napoleon's physician, and his brother, Georges Louis, was once the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg. In 1899, he married Louise de Hérédia, the youngest daughter of the poet. Pierre Louÿs, as he preferred to inscribe himself, apparently decided upon the literary profession at an early age; and, as his family was rich, he was carefully educated for that career. He matured early, and when only twenty years old, founded a literary review, *La Conque*, which counted among its contributors Paul Valéry, Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, and Swinburne. In the following year, 1891, he published his first book of poems, *Astarté*, the early fruits of his erotic Hellenism, which was followed, in 1893, by *Les Poésies de Méléager*, a volume of translations. *Les Chansons de Bilitis* appeared in 1894. This engaging collection of erotic and Sapphic poems in prose was presented as a translation from an unknown Greek poet, and is said to have deceived certain of the learned. It is certain that the author's reputation as an antiquarian, even at the age of twenty-four, was sufficiently considerable that so astute a philologist as Ulrich von Willamowitz-Moellendorf, on the grounds of the "Vie de Bilitis" with which the book is prefaced, did not think it wasted effort to call the author to task for a certain

confusion of the Periklean with the Alexandrian periods of Greek culture. Claude Debussy, for whose art the friendship of Pierre Louÿs is largely responsible, has set a suite of these prose poems to music.

The novel *Aphrodite*, appearing in 1896, gave Louÿs a sensational notoriety which all the perfection of his art has not availed to live down. This tragic history of an Alexandrian courtesan, who, having found all the triumphs and riches of life empty, commits a great sacrilege and gives her life for a flavor of sublimity, ending logically in death, is, in fact, a very moral, if indecorous, book; but it has fallen into the hands of the philistines. The question of the morality or immorality of *Aphrodite* does not, however, immediately concern us. What does concern us is that it is an excellent historical novel of Alexandria in the first century before the Christian era, with a wealth of archeological detail deftly blended into a finely worked pattern, with a memorable plot and a variety of extremely fine characterizations, and written in a prose which, in beauty and purity, is equal to the best of Anatole France. *Salammbô* is more impressive, but we are carnal and indolent enough to prefer *Aphrodite*; and the loss is really not so great as it might be, for the art which has gone into the making of *Aphrodite* is as pure and as perfect, whatever it may lack in stature and breadth, as that of Flaubert's paragon of historical romances. François Coppée hailed *Aphrodite*, upon its first appearance, as a great historical novel, and the most intelligent French critics have always regarded it as such; but its immense popular sale, based on its suspect, rather than its sterling literary qualities, has left it and its gifted author in a hopelessly misunderstood position

before the world. For Pierre Louÿs really is an eminently respectable, if perhaps not a very great artist, and the least we can grant him is sincerity and a serious purpose in his art. He was also a highly reputed archeologist, and, although he did not, like Mérimée, achieve the seat which he deserved in the Academy of Inscriptions, his erudition is attested by many learned monographs on the life of ancient Greece and by his work in the *Revue des Livres Anciens*, which he edited for many years.

Louÿs published little, and everything that he published is marked by the same refinement of ideas and the same perfect finesse of craftsmanship. Of Pierre Louÿs, having granted his many limitations, it may be said, with absolute truth, that no sentence which he ever wrote could have been better written by any other hand. Besides the works which we have mentioned, he published, in 1896, a translation of certain dialogues of Lucian and, in 1898, a Mériméean novel of passion, set in modern Spain, entitled *La Femme et le Fantin*. The amusing conceit which he has called *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole* was published in 1901. After those active years, he published only three volumes of short stories: *Sanguines*, in 1903; *Archipel*, in 1906; and *Crepuscule des Nymphes*, which appeared only a few weeks before his death, in 1925. This valedictorian address of Louÿs' is not, in fact, a new work, but a definitive edition of five stories written since 1900 and known, at least to collectors, in expensive private editions. It contains the stories of Leda, who loved the swan and hated the brusque faun; of Ariadne, who fled from the reality of desertion to embrace the illusion of immortality in the fickle love of a god; of the incestuous Byblis, whose sufferings flowed away

in the stream of her tears; and of Danae, who scorned the golden shower and demanded that Zeus disclose his awful self to her. The re-issue of these loved stories, under a title so redolent of the lost beauty which Louÿs had sought to recapture in his work, filled the poet's admirers with sad thoughts of the twilight which had fallen upon the delicate mind of their creator, so soon to descend into the endless night.

And here, in any of these books, except perhaps *La Femme et le Pantin*, which is not so perfect, and the translations, which are not his own, we have enough of Pierre Louÿs to command our respect for his attributes. We cannot fail to accord him this esteem, nor to recognize in his paganism the motives of elegance and liberalism, and to perceive, inspiring his pictures of antique passions, his conviction that love is the great reservoir of art, that love in itself is beautiful, and that the morality of the Greeks (to quote the preface to *Aphrodite*) "has remained that of all great minds." A philosophical contemplation of the history of art will go far to sustain these reprobate views. And not the least interesting thing about the paganism of Pierre Louÿs is the important fact that it is more genuine, in spirit as well as in structure, than the paganism of André Chénier, of Leconte de Lisle, of Anatole France, and of the galaxy of modern pretenders to the ancient uprightness. Louÿs does not merely glance backwards; he does not content himself with reconstructing a dead epoch; he contemplates life as a Greek, and feels its tang as the Greeks felt it. He knows that life is a moment, and that it can be beautiful. He knows that love is the highest expression of life; that love, like

music, is an art; that all perfection culminates in death, and that this is well. He loves life the more dearly, and cherishes its perfection with a loftier ecstasy, because he can see, in the distance, only the skiff of Charon, waiting. He is, in a word, a moralist. . . .

ROBERT DE MONTESQUIOU

THERE is a certain virtue in being preposterous, if one can be inimitably and magnificently preposterous. This is a superlative and very difficult quality, which, in its perfect flower, amounts to something resembling genius. To achieve it, one must possess, first of all, a staunch resolution of spirit. Having progressed so far, one need not fear the energetic competition of nine-tenths of humanity, for their rivalry is at best amateurish and inept. If one has a natural gift for preposterous attitudes, and the riches necessary to indulging them, and in addition, a genuine flair for the erratic in one's cosmos, one can rest comfortably assured of at least a temporary immortality. So Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac, the last of the ancient Armagnac house of that name and cousin to most of the nobility of France, when he died at Versailles a few years ago, may well have died in peace.

For this Montesquiou was, without doubt, the most accomplished poseur who has clipped years with our unimaginative generation. Barbey d'Aurevilly, who died in 1899, was a pigmy as compared with this prodigy; Oscar Wilde, a twittering facsimile. Montesquiou alone had an authentic genius for the absurd, and the effrontery to carry off his postures in the manner that they deserved. The sire and child of all the extravagances of Symbolism, the prototype of the Des Esseintes of *A Rebours* and the Charlus of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, the most lavish, fastidious, and original entertainer in Paris, he

was a figure which it took eight centuries to produce and the like of which our century is not likely to know again. The mystery with which he habitually surrounded his person; the apartments of his earlier years, embellished with all the strange richness of the Orient; his later establishments in Versailles, *Le Pavillon des Muses* and *Le Palais Rose*, decorated in exquisitely efflorescent taste; his perverse affectations—the cult of the *Hydrangea*, the symphonies of liqueurs and perfumes, the jewel-encrusted tortoise, the astonishing wardrobe—his monstrous and indefatigable literary activity; his associations with the whole aristocracy of France and the most celebrated literary and artistic figures of his time, and his outspoken contempt of both; his entertainments, unmatched for sheer elaborateness and ingenuity since the Renaissance; his sympathetic view of himself as a great poet neglected by an obtuse public: it may be said that Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac spent his life in the diligent labor of living up to his celebrated portrait by Whistler, which hangs in the *Salon du Champ de Mars*. Whatever we may think of Montesquiou's verse and of his estimate of himself, we must applaud the ascetic persistency of his effort, of which his memoirs are an ultimate stroke.

Although Montesquiou published, in his lifetime, thirteen volumes of verse and seventeen of prose, and cultivated literary society and esteem with an assiduousness at once arrogant and cringing, he will perhaps be best remembered as the protagonist of Huysmans and Proust. Yet it must be admitted that his poems are, to say the least, totally unlike anything else that has ever been written. Let us quote the two quatrains made famous by Arthur Symonds, who has remarked of them that, though

their composition may not have required thought, it could not have failed to demand labor:

Terreur des Troglôdytès,
Sur leurs tapis de Turquies,
Et de tous les rats de tes
Batrakhomyomakhyes,

Homère: Méridarpax,
Voleur de portioncule;
Trôxartès et Psikharpax,
Par qui Péléïôn recule.

Les Chauves-Souris was Montesquiou's first book; it was published thirty years ago, in covers of violet velvet, and contains some five hundred pages of poetical enigmas, of which the above is only an average specimen. For many years, artistic Paris had been waiting for this book. Montesquiou had let it be known that he was writing Symbolist poems compared with which those of Mallarmé would blanch in puerile simplicity; the fable grew, with its author abetting it: but Paris was probably not prepared for such a shock as it received when the formidable volume finally appeared. Paris was flabbergasted; it did not know what to make of this strange poet, whom it was so ready to admire. The apparently rigid divisions into which the poems are grouped, and the prose commentary by which the poet attempts to explain them, would argue that Montesquiou actually aimed, at some obscure end; but that anyone ever surmised what this might be, is very doubtful. Despite the commentary, the poems are merely so many words—great, gorgeous, flowering, monstrous words, to be sure; words that Phoibos Apollo might playfully have flung at Ares to shame the hot-

headed braggart with his ignorance of Greek roots; but words without the slightest meaning. Montesquiou's subsequent poems only repeat this original obscurity, which no one has thus far taken the trouble to elucidate. Rémy de Gourmont pretended to believe that this vagueness might, after all, conceal a mystery; but one can see all too clearly the quandary of that affable critic, who wished to encourage, even at the risk of insincerity. Maurice Barrès, in dedicating his *Greco ou le Secret de Tolède* to Montesquiou, hailed him as "l'inventeur de tant d'objets et de figures rares," which is a sufficiently literal compliment. Extraordinary and memorable as he was as a man, as a poet, Montesquiou should have to wait long—so long!—for that admiration which he was certain that posterity would reserve for his curious genius.

The memoirs of Montesquiou, *Les Pas Effacés*, are, in many ways, his best gift to that posterity, for the book limns a remarkable personality, in whose consciousness converged the richest social and artistic streams of his half-century. The last survivor of an ancient house, of the greatest nobility of France, rich, strangely gifted, and determined to reduce every detail of his life to the meticulous delicacy of a fine art, Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac, by his very nature, was a romantic figure. A Royalist stubbornly demanding all the rights of precedence observed before the Revolution, and at the same time, an artist avid for the society of writers, painters, and actors, his social situation was unique. He could look down on his aristocratic friends and relatives as bores; he could look down on his artistic associates as bores. He did both. Literature has probably never known so consummate a snob as the protagonist of *Les Pas Effacés*, who adored the earth trodden by the foot of Gabriele

d'Annunzio, and introduced the poet to Ida Rubenstein, but could never quite forgive him for his ignoble origins. He is at his best when writing of his illustrious ancestors, and he does so often and at great length. One remembers Des Esseintes when Montesquiou writes of his family, as one remembers Monsieur de Charlus when he writes of art. And his malignity is incredible. He quarreled, literally, with everyone with whom he came into intimate contact throughout his long life (he was born in 1855), from his tutors and the members of his parents' household to his friends at Versailles. (The truth is, that he suffered from a persecution mania.) He writes of these interminable controversies, all distorted by spite and none of them in the least consequential, with an incredibly venomous spleen. Always he justifies himself, even when his fault is patent to the world; and he never forgives, pursuing each affront with cold fury to the field of honor or to the secret furies of his closet.

His intolerance was equaled only by his egotism; and when we have said that, we have not said all, by any means. He was capable of regarding Marcel Proust, whom he knew intimately over a number of years, with indifferent patronage; and he undoubtedly fancied himself to be the intellectual peer, if not the superior, of the most famous of the illustrious throng that frequented the receptions in his Pavillion des Muses. And now he will be annoyed with God, should he discover in Heaven that he was not, on earth, quite the personage that he thought himself. But the proud Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac will not see either God or Heaven. He should never be at ease in a democratic monarchy ruled by a Carpenter's Son; and the divine intelligence is, at all events, tactful and discreet in such matters.

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDES

SPAIN passed an epoch after the bitter awakening of the Treaty of Paris. The war with the United States had ended in a defeat as desolating to the morale of the nation as it was to her arms. Political cataclysm did not bring the labor difficulties of the Río Tinto mines closer to a settlement or hasten the good citizens of Madrid at their curaçao and coffee. The change which it accomplished was more fundamental in its nature, farther reaching in its results. It bore a new generation of sober-minded, somewhat despairing young men, at least capable of facing the truth concerning their nation's destiny, if they were impotent to do anything about it. These are the Spain that is slowly emerging from the lethargy of the centuries.

The most accessible observing post of a nation's change is its art. Students of Spanish literature have noted the increasing number of promising young writers, and the slow but certain unfoldment of a vigorous national spirit in a corpus which, since the gallant age of Spain, has merited but little respect. It is doubly significant, then, that a writer who won his first fame some forty years ago, should continue to produce novels--and above all, realistic novels, in a manner long outmoded--which deserve and enjoy the respect of the generation which their author has helped to influence in the right direction. The friend of that indefatigable argonaut, William Dean Howells, who introduced his works to the English-speak-

ing peoples, the inheritor-in-part of the tradition of José María de Pereda, the favorite realist of the last generation, Armando Palacio Valdés has survived his friend, his master, and his school. This veteran novelist has taken leave of his public as many times as a fickle prima donna. When *Tristán o el Pesimismo* was published, in 1906, he encouraged the rumor of his retirement. When *Papeles del Doctor Angélico* appeared, in 1911, he spoke lightly of the book as an unimportant collection of short stories, and definitely announced that he would write no more, because he had nothing more to write. But this stout ancient was far from finished. *Años de Juventud del Doctor Angélico*, a further collection of anecdotes of the delightful sentimentalist he had created, appeared, without apologies, in 1917, and (*La Novela de un Novelista* intervening) the Doctor's sentimental history was completed, six years later, in *La Hija de Natalia*. We shall not believe in the retirement of Armando Palacio Valdés as long as his sturdy hand can hold a pen.

The best qualities of Palacio Valdés as an artist are to be seen in his recent works, as clearly as in those which, twenty years ago, gave him a reputation abroad unequaled by any Spanish novelist except Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, whose emptiness we have long since plumbed. Age has mellowed his art, but his touch, whether for character, for humor, or for life, has lost none of its original sureness. The extraordinary vitality of his talent points with edifying emphasis to the security and essential rightness of the conceptions whereon it rests. Still active, one may say almost in his prime, at the age of seventy-odd, this dean of Spanish novelists is comparable with the late Anatole France, with Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy,

Arno Holz, Gerhart Hauptmann, Maxim Gorky, and the valiant of Apollo whose talent has only been mellowed by the flight of their allotted three score years and ten. In *Papeles del Doctor Angélico*, *Años de Juventud del Doctor Angélico* and *La Hija de Natalia*, he has created probably the most charming of all his characters, surrounded him with a varied and delightful group, and carried them all graciously to their appointed destinies. The amiable and scholarly old bachelor who, upon the death of his closest friend (a Cabinet Minister, who has departed this life with some suddenness in consequence of a political scandal), undertakes the care of a madcap young girl, and puts himself to frantic anxiety to get her respectably married while she has still a shred of her reputation left, only to discover, when the feat is accomplished, that he has himself fallen in love with her, is a true brother of the magnanimous Capitán Ribot; and the devastating Natalia makes one with the author's Marta^s and Glorias, Soledads and Rogelias, in the immortal company of women who live in the fictions of Palacio Valdés.

To have produced this trilogy, in the decline of his career, is a greater feat than Gorky's in writing *Dielo Artamonovykh* after twenty sterile years, for the fiction of Palacio Valdés is artistically as pure as traditional fiction can be, and Gorky's is not. But this is not all. In *La Novela de un Novelista*, he has given us an autobiographical fragment so rich in serene humanity that it will almost certainly enter into the body of classical literature. Forty years ago, he began his autobiographical reflections in *El Idilio de un Enfermo*, and he has certainly been the hero of his own tale in the three books of

Doctor Angel Jiménez, in *Maximina*, and in *Riverita*. But of these, only *La Novela de un Novelista* is truly worthy of the man as we now conceive him, for it is filled with the mellowness and magnanimity, the tolerance and spaciousness of a worthy, exemplary, and unwearied old age.

These gracious amenities are as clearly evident in *Santa Rogelia*. In his youth, like all Spaniards, Palacio Valdés was a controversialist. The path of Naturalism led him to many ruptures with established opinion. In *Marta y María*, his first successful novel and one of his best, he involuntarily caused some perturbation to the strait clericalists by making his saint an hysterical sentimentalist and his worldly woman, a charming and passionate divinity. This offense by implication he repeated whenever the normal emotional selection of his characters led him to a similar necessity; for, although Palacio Valdés has remained devout throughout his career, he has not felt obliged, as an artist, to alter the facts of the life, which he has chosen to portray in compliment to the Church. His *La Fé*, which stands with *La Espuma* as the only wholly insipid novels he has written, brought him severe reproach, its representation of a modern Saint Anthony, assailed by the twin devils of rationalism and of the flesh, being construed as a direct attack upon the clergy. Palacio Valdés would not compromise then, nor will he compromise to-day. But age has brought him serenity, and serenity has shown him how a vehement spirit can yield to life, and yet, in the end, find reconciliation with the intellect, the flesh, and with God. Rogelia, the vivid Asturian girl, who marries a brute of a miner, flees from him with the man she loves, and later returns, as an immolation to duty, only to be driven away with curses,

realizes this ideal consummation, not in her fluctuating material progress, but in the gradual development of the spiritual crisis which impels her to her happily unwanted sacrifice. *Santa Rogelia* is a novel which simply could not have been written by anybody else than Palacio Valdés, nor by Palacio Valdés, except at the age of seventy-three.

In *Tristán o el Pesimismo*, we have a fine example of the author's rationalized Naturalism. No longer reminiscent of the French models which gave Palacio Valdés, so many years ago, his first technical suggestions, there is, in this Naturalism, something of the veritable taste of Spain. Palacio Valdés has been, from the first, too finely aware of the larger possibilities of his art to be contented with any mere transposition of a "slice of life." Instead, in this novel, which we have selected to typify his realistic method, we have an admirably contrasted family group, with its friends and retainers. We have a discontented young hero, one of the type that Menander neatly terms *ἑαυτὸν τιμωρούμενος*, as typical of modern Spain as Goncharov's Oblomov is of Imperial Russia. From the contact of these personalities, the drama gradually and inevitably develops. The hero, as in so many of the author's novels, is not a hero at all, but a morbid and despicable shadow. It is the women of the story who live --the erring Elena, the outraged Clara. They, and that saint on earth, Don Germán Reynoso; and Visita and Cirilo, the maimed old couple, so much more secure in their love and helplessness than those others who have had no infirmities to protect them from the world. The curtain rises at hazard, as one might come upon such a group in life. The scenes unfold as the days multiply,

with few exceptional happenings, but with a certain luminosity in the commonplace. All of the elements of life are there: its prose, its lyricism, its occasional drama, its humor, its pathos, its littleness, its greatness. But it is life filtered through the consciousness of an artist. Each element is refined in the telling and reduced to its just proportion in the scheme of this particular milieu, without a false note or a wholly dull page. The episodes, dissociated as in life, yet largely dependent upon one another, combine to form an interesting, consistent, and thoroughly convincing plot. And in this, the justification of the fame of Armando Palacio Valdés, both in Spain and abroad, largely resides: for he has found the way to be sincere, to be literally truthful, and to be interesting at the same time. We are not sure that this does not also mark him more definitely as an artist than many critics seem willing to admit.

Born in 1853, in the Asturian village of Entralgo, Palacio Valdés began his literary career as a critic. His pungent style, his gentle humor, and the soundness and independence of his opinions, won him a popular following. While still a young man, he was appointed editor of the *Revista Europea*. The Spanish novel was at the height of its renaissance when Palacio Valdés came upon the scene, and the names of Fernán Caballero, Antonio de Trueba, Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, José María de Pereda, Juan Valera, and Benito Pérez Galdós were heard in the land. In his criticism—the best of which is collected in *Los Oradores del Ateneo*, *Los Novelistas Españoles*, *Nuevo Viaje al Parnaso*, and *La Literatura en 1881* (which he wrote in collaboration with his distinguished contemporary and co-worker, Leopoldo Alas)—Palacio

Valdés vigorously advanced the cause of Naturalism, toward which Spanish fiction, then completely under the influence of the French, was tending. In one of the essays in *Los Oradores del Ateneo*, he sums up his code of Naturalism in the phrase: "This soil can produce novels." It was this that, in 1881, he set himself to demonstrate in his first novel, *El Señorito Octavio*, and its vindication which accomplished the great success of *Marta y María*, which appeared two years later.

Except in the art of the Goncourts, the Naturalistic method has never been applied to the novel with so much purity and logic, and at the same time, with such an uncompromising submission to the principles of literary art, as in the fictions of Armando Palacio Valdés. One could censure them plentifully, and, in fact, Palacio Valdés's native critics and the late James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (who seems never to have fancied him) have made his faults as an artist somewhat more familiar than his virtues. Yet, it would be hard to discover a finer realism than that of *La Hermana San Sulpicio*, or a more actual and more tender humanity than that of *La Alegría del Capitán Ribot*. The one is based upon a model borrowed from the Goncourts, to be sure, and the other is too slight in texture; but neither objection matters greatly, so long as both novels are pure as art. The most serious fault that can be cited against Palacio Valdés is that of imitation to the detriment of national flavor; but in this instance, the crisis in Spanish literary history which these too French early novels of his helped to bridge, must be taken into account. For the rest, when Palacio Valdés borrows from Valera, as in *Marta y María*, or from Pereda, as in *José*, he is merely claiming his birthright. Aubrey F. G.

Bell rightly claims that Palacio Valdés is "really natural rather than Naturalist, while his Asturian humor is English rather than French."

By rationalizing Naturalism, by lending it kindness and infusing it with the authentic spirit of art, what Palacio Valdés really has done is create a type of the psychological novel. One has only actually to compare with his the books which he is accused of having imitated, in order to vindicate his originality and, in most cases, the superior excellence of his work. For Palacio Valdés, whatever his faults, is by instinct an artist, and he is sincere, both about his art and about life. He cannot, by any exuberance of appreciation, be accounted great. He loves the earth too well to soar high above it; but his art is the better for the soil which bears it down. He writes too spontaneously, and with too obvious a pleasure in the writing, to write superlatively well. All of his work "dates" conspicuously, and most of it is destined to quick forgetfulness. But while it remains, the fiction of this fine relic of the old school, who retains, even in his advanced age, a genuine gusto for every flavor of life that few of our weary youngsters can match, is worth reading, as much for itself as for its contribution to the background of contemporary Spanish fiction. With his tenderness of insight into human nature, his delicate and sympathetic humor, the hospitality, the magnanimity, and the mellowness of his point of view, and with his fundamentally romantic and lyrical (this in a Naturalist!) attitude to the drab realities of life, he is veritably a son of the creator of Don Quixote.

JAKOB WASSERMANN

THERE are writers who are produced by a given social situation, as inevitably as a cat begets kittens. The flux of material conditions, creating maladjustments between the facts of life and the spiritual conceptions necessary for continued progress, must, by some means, discover a voice to define them, to localize and reveal the point of their discrepancy. Invariably this prophet, when he is found, is seen to be a man whose fortune has placed him in intimate contact with such a society, without allowing him completely to enter it; a man with nerves to note and eyes to see, and with a heart to lament this conflict, yet with an interest apart: at once its greatest martyr, its closest fellow, and its most remote observer.

Jakob Wassermann is such an observer of the spiritual quandaries of contemporary Europe. His intellectual isolation may be summed up in the fact that he was born, on the 10th of March 1873, of Jewish parentage, in the Bavarian industrial city of Fürth. In his autobiography, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, tells of his family and the conditions of his early life, and every line that he writes only the more clearly reveals his solitude. His father was a typical Jew of the more intelligent type, a hopelessly unsuccessful merchant, admiring Schiller and Gutzkow, detesting Lassalle, and fatuously pursuing a beauty which he did not know how to grasp. When Wassermann spoke to him of his desire to become a

writer, the announcement was greeted with true Jewish scorn, but he was left to work out his destiny—if he could—alone.

This Wassermann did, all too alone, in the shy, offended, miserable years of his bleak youth. He was sent to the gymnasium at Fürth—his family, though strictly nationalist, does not appear to have been religious—and little by little, he began to observe life for himself. As a child, he had been so shocked by the bitterness with which the Old Testament is filled, that he conceived an intolerable repugnance for the book. While at school, he read the New Testament, and the tenderness of its spirit gave him back all that the older narrative had taken away from him. He did not commit the absurdity of becoming a Christian; he had merely come to know and love another Jew, whose spirit spoke to his own more deeply than did that of Moses. Then he discovered the writings of another man who had made a like discovery, and whose thought and character were likewise to have an influence in the formation of his own—Baruch Spinoza, whom Novalis called a "Gott-trunkener Mensch."

Wassermann's youth was full of hardships and disappointments. In 1890, he received a tuition scholarship at Munich, but lacking funds, he was forced to pursue his studies amid harrowing privations. Then he went to Würzburg and obtained a small commercial clerkship, at a salary just sufficient to keep body and soul together, only to lose it through the prejudice of a fellow-worker, who procured his dismissal by a disgusting contrivance. In despair, Wassermann then presented himself to serve his time in the army. Upon his discharge, he obtained a clerkship in Freiburg, which he lost when, at his wit's

end, he stole a pitiful sum to preserve himself from actual starvation.

Thus, for eight years, Wassermann suffered all the degradations of hunger and rejection. May 1898 saw him in Vienna, where it was his good fortune to become acquainted with the family of his future wife. There, as Julie Wassermann-Speyer records in her short and admirably temperate *Wassermann und Sein Werk*, "for the first time, he found the well-marked outlines of a cultured tradition. Everything there contrasted sharply with the pettiness which he had elsewhere encountered and which he has scorned with so much vehemence . . . an atmosphere of freedom and refinement, of ease and inspiration." According to Julie Wassermann-Speyer, the head of this engaging household is the prototype of the President Feuerbach of Wassermann's *Caspar Hauser*.

In due time, Wassermann asked the old man for the hand of his daughter. "What is your income?" he was asked. "Not a kreuzer," Wassermann replied. "Excellent," said that very original gentleman, "you may have my daughter. I like your frankness!" And so Wassermann was married, and the long struggle with poverty was begun anew, relieved now by the security of an established home, a sympathetic partner, and the light of idealism. At that time, Wassermann had already published *Die Juden von Zirndorf* and *Die Schaffnerin*. *Die Geschichte der Jungen Renate Fuchs* was just completed, and *Der Moloch* then under way. Already a small circle of friends and readers had become aware of the presence of a new and decisive voice in German literature. Wassermann's artistic career had begun, and his spiritual maturity was at hand.

Wassermann had seen much and suffered much in his hungry years. Like Heine, he was a Jew and a German, the keenest spirit, yet the most remote, in the mêlée of modernity; the type closest to the heart of our changing culture, yet the least a part of it. He had thought much in those years, and he had watched life with the eyes of those two other Jews who were his youthful mentors. Slowly a new world-conception, which is as old as Nature itself, was forming in his mind—the idea of the common identity of all things in Nature, of man's individual responsibility for the whole of humanity. One can observe this idea, coloring and directing all his thought, gradually taking form through the long procession of his early novels and tales: in *Die Schwestern*, *Caspar Hauser*, *Die Masken Erwin Reiners*, *Der Goldene Spiegel*, and his first great success, *Das Gänsemännchen*, before it comes to its first complete and mystical expression in *Christian Wahnschaffe*.

This idea, which reacts upon the art of Jakob Wassermann with the force of an obsession, is the pure conception of Christ, which perhaps only Saint Francis of Assisi and Dostoevsky have perfectly understood and communicated in action. It is a doctrine at once humble and proud: that man, as an inseparable part of the universe, bears within himself, with tragic glory, the whole sad blight of the world's sin; that the virtue of the brother whom he has never seen is his virtue, and his guilt his guilt; that it is his obligation to utilize for good the terrible creative force of evil; that, being the universe itself within the miserable particle of the universe which he is, he has no being save in the whole which makes him noble, and no worthy employment save in the humble service

of the fellow-men who are more a part of him than he is of himself.

Thus Christian Wahnschaffe is troubled, in the midst of his luxurious enjoyment, by a presentiment of vague unrest, until he voluntarily takes upon himself Christ's injunction to the rich young man of Judaea and goes forth in sackcloth to serve his fellow-man. He does not find rest until, deprived of all the advantages of his former life, of riches, of love, even of the companionship of Ruth Hoffmann's presence in the world, he has looked with eyes clear at last into the hearts of such wretched beings as Niels Heinrich, finding there an image of his own, wherein the essential good excels the evil. One has found this conception, expressed with transcendental conviction, in the novels of Dostoevsky. But Dostoevsky, while he conveys this sentiment of the mystical unity of humanity with greater art than Wassermann—he could not do so with greater conviction and passion—was a sufferer from the holy malady, seeking his consummations in blacker hearts and amid deeper depravity and more malignant evil than Wassermann dares to describe or than any but the most unimaginable dregs of the earth can produce for the accusation of life.

Wassermann is closer to life in his conceptions than Dostoevsky, but infinitely farther removed from it in art and fact. His characters, like Dostoevsky's, are at once individuals and symbols. But Christian Wahnschaffe never lives and breathes, as Myshkin; nor Niels Heinrich, as Rogojin. Nor do his carefully constructed plots bear the conviction of reality. His figures, for the most part, move like puppets in a fantastic show, dense with symbolical meanings of terrific significance. They move, they

talk; they seek, they suffer, and achieve: but only now and again do they breathe, like a sick Pierrot taking his farewell of love, or a marionette touched to life for a magical instant while it heaves a sigh and wishes it were dead again. And this is where the pure, spontaneous, undisciplined art of Dostoevsky rises above the magnificently harmonious prose, the careful poise, the diligently constructed plots, and the finished dexterity of his German disciple. With all his haste and prolixity, with all his melodrama and his disorganization, he accomplishes a transcendent greatness which Wassermann will never be able to approach.

Wassermann's deficiency is hard to specify, but it undoubtedly exists. He has failed in *Christian Wahnschaffe*, which, however, remains one of the few really fine novels of our generation. He has failed equally in his epic of the evil of greed, *Ulrike Woytich*, and he has not even approached success, in this sense, in the other volumes thus far published of his projected cycle of *Der Wendekreis*. It is obviously not a question of Wassermann's sincerity, of the vigor of his conceptions, the capacity of his art, or the passion of its execution. In all of these qualities, Jakob Wassermann stands beyond challenge. It is rather the indecision which apparently still remains in Wassermann's mind between the art of Balzac and that of Dostoevsky, and as well the question, which it is still much too early to discuss, of his own inherent spiritual capacity for absorbing and utilizing such a conception as that which he has set forth in *Christian Wahnschaffe*.

Stefan Zweig calls Wassermann the Balzac of German literature. The influence of Balzac, in fact, has been and remains stronger in Wassermann's art than that of

Dostoevsky, which has decisively inspired only his finest book and lent color to the rest. The design of *Der Wendekreis*, which he plans in ten volumes—of which *Der Unbekannte Gast*, *Oberlin's Drei Stufen*, *Ulrike Woytich* and *Faber oder die Verlorenen Jahre* have already appeared—bears a curious resemblance to that of *Cornédie Humaine*. "I am interested primarily in life, in making a synthesis of life which is based firmly upon my own viable contacts," Wassermann told Pierre Loving in 1924. "I try not to ignore the inner vision; the inner vision is of overwhelming importance, but my objective observation is always at work correcting that inner grasp of reality. My aim is to pack the whole complex modern scene into my books. . . ."

This he is certainly doing, if we can grant, as in this case we do, that Germany, in the thirty years between Wassermann's maturity and the Spartacan Revolution, presents to the novelist a clinical study in which all the cancerous growths of our modern social maladjustment may be profitably scrutinized. Like Balzac, he concentrates the society which he wishes to weigh in suitable groupings of characters, who are at once the fact and the symbols of the reality. In their fortunes, we follow the fortunes of Europe. Wiser than Balzac, he lavishes his power upon the development of these characters, leaving the setting to create itself through their reality. Also like Balzac—and this is his greatest fault—he makes concessions to his aim of reaching the great public. We will grant at once that he does so for a more worthy purpose than Balzac's—Wassermann, despite his success, is, in his art itself, the least commercial and the most messianic of novelists. But all that he has given to the numerical in-

crease of his immediate public, through providing each of his novels with an exciting plot, so contrived as to awaken and sustain interest, he has lost to his characters and to his art; for his plots are constantly tripping his characters up and rudely edging them off the scene. He has, we may say, striven too well to correct, in his own work, the obvious faults of Dostoevsky; and his efforts in this direction have resulted in a disadvantage, rather than in a gain. For they have helped to keep him from the complete, decisive, organic expression which his controlling ideas demand and which his sincerity merits. Perhaps this too will come, for Wassermann's art is a thoroughly self-conscious instrument, critical and sure. But nothing that Wassermann has thus far given us, privileges such a confidence. His talent appears, in reality, to be more conventional and less significant than our admiration for his world conception makes us willing to admit.

ANNA DE NOAILLES

THE finesses of subjectivity and emotion which are woman's most valuable contribution to literature are nowhere so admirably exemplified as in the verse and prose of Anna de Noailles. She, more than any other writer, is the "sensitive plant" of modern literature. Her exquisite sensibility, nourished upon all the refinements of life, is transfigured at each approach to the sanctuary of beauty. As radium particles impinge upon a screen of sulphide of zinc and make it luminous, her delicate and elaborately sophisticated faculties of apprehension respond, with infinite variations of emotion, to every element of the visible world wherein she can perceive the aspect of loveliness or purity, verity or worth. Her spirit is a reservoir of insatiable, yet fastidious receptivity. Her literary talent is a fluent instrument, refined and modulated to the point of absolute expressiveness, and devoted to the communication of this richness. It is the extraordinary combination which her prose and verse represents of a highly accomplished literary talent with a delicately discriminating, intensely feminine susceptibility, which has given Madame de Noailles a celebrity in her own time unmatched by any poetess of France since Louise Labé distilled in her eager verse the rapture and the torment of love.

"Sappho," writes Plutarch, in his *Amatorius*, "fully deserves to be numbered among the Muses. The Romans tell how Kakos, son of Hephaistos, sent forth fire and flame from his mouth: and Sappho utters words verily mingled with fire, and gives vent through her song to the

heat that consumes her heart, thus healing, in the words of Philoxenos, the pain of love with the melodies of the Muse." As much might appropriately be said of Madame de Noailles, for there is no modern poet who approaches so closely as she the actual, original spirit of the Lesbian school. Oscar Wilde, having endured, none too courageously, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, consoled himself with the flattering reflection that he was "a Greek born out of due season." He was not. Madame de Noailles is as much, is far more profoundly a child of the modern world than Wilde; but in her attitude to life and in the essential qualities of her art, she is pure Greek—the Greek of Lesbos, in the forty-second Olympiad.

To produce the talent of Madame de Noailles, an altogether exceptional conjunction of antique richness and modern poignancy (in the realms of apprehension and sensation respectively) has been required. The recognizably Greek elements of her art are refined and conditioned by the complicated nuances of the modern intellect, which intrude upon, qualify, and alter it at every point, but which the poetess does not vainly regret or as vainly seek to elude. For Madame de Noailles has accepted her spirit and her world; and by accepting them, she has finally reconciled the agonizing discrepancies which these inseparable yet inimical elements represent. She has achieved simplicity through a process of elaborate sophistication; and her intellectual attitude in this respect curiously resembles that of the Hellenized Romans of the Decadence, whom Ovid advised:

*"Nec levis, ingenuas pectus coluisse per artes,
Cura sit; et linguas edidicisse duas."*

She writes as one who has scaled the firmament and set her audacious foot on the shining bastions of Olympus, only to be wearied of skies and gods and to turn to earth again, although not forgetting those mighty raptures; as one who has seen everything, who has inherited all riches and mundane greatness, who has known great passions and read all the books, only to return at length, as a young girl—a very wise young girl—to simple, earthly love as the only emotion worth cherishing, the only delight without flaw, weariness, or remorse that is left to one who confesses alone the life which she feels within her breast.

In the poems collected in *Le Cœur Innombrable*, *L'Ombre des Jours*, *Les Eblouissements*, *Les Vivants et les Morts*, *Les Forces Éternelles*, *Poème de l'Amour* and *L'Honneur de Souffrir*; in her two novels, *Le Visage Émerveillé* and *La Nouvelle Espérance*, and in the short stories which she has assembled under the title of *Les Innocentes ou la Sagesse des Femmes*, the unvarying theme is the conflict, the rapture, and the anguish of human love. Flaubert, writing to George Sand in her old age, speaks of her as "an old troubador who always sings, and must ever sing, of perfect love." The intellectual clarity and the courage of Madame de Noailles preserve her from the extravagance of sentimentality implied by Flaubert's adjective. Within the classic contours of her art, Romanticism resumes the dignity which facility and sentiment have elsewhere degraded. Love, to Madame de Noailles, is not sweetness and light and pink roses; love is torment and rapture and the very essence of being. It is the Eros Anikate of the Ancients, the invincible love which sets a madness upon him whom it possesses,

which is signified to the poetess in every aspect of Nature and in every rhythm of life. It is the sole integrity of a dissolute universe; the sole immutable fact of an existence beset by doubt; the one perfection and the one amenity. And because it is perfect, love is inscrutable and inexorable; and since it is perfect and inscrutable and inexorable, the thought of love suggests the thought of death, which is as beautiful and pure, and in the end, as much to be desired, save that the blight of nothingness after so many dreams fills the poetess with resentment and dread. The death of one who has been greatly loved is the theme of *L'Honneur de Souffrir*, and in the whole body of Madame de Noailles's perfect verse, it is doubtful if she has elsewhere quite achieved the high note of poetic expression which is sustained throughout the sequence of short poems which make up this volume. Gossip and the dates of composition intimately connect this volume with the death of Maurice Barrès, a writer of prose as exquisite as Madame de Noailles's verse, who long inhabited the same social world as the gifted Comtesse.

The exceptional variety of racial and cultural streams which converge in the personality of Madame de Noailles have doubtless had their share in producing the singular refinement of her talent. Before her marriage with the Comte Mathieu de Noailles, Madame de Noailles was the Princess Anna-Elisabeth de Brancovan, a descendant of the old Wallachian house of Bibesco, and maternally descended from the equally ancient and noble Cretean family of Masurus. Born at Paris in 1876, she has added to her Greek and Roumanian heritage the culture of the French. Madame de Noailles represents in modern France the perfect type of the lyric poet. Her personal

manner she derives directly from Baudelaire, her pastoral manner from Jammes; and she speaks in both with an authentic accent. Her technique is mature and sophisticated, and refined to a remarkable degree of economy and expressiveness. Her prose, sensitive, elusive, and cadenced, partakes more of the qualities of lyric poetry than of narrative: her short stories are studies in pure atmosphere and emotion; and her novels, although written twenty years ago, possess much the same exquisite texture and the strange, impalpable beauty of her poems. As Donna Maria in *Le Visage Émerveillé* and as Sabine de Fontenay in *La Nouvelle Espérance*, she speaks in her own person and pursues her ancient quest—the aspiration to envisage the whole reality of life and the sudden splendor of beauty's brief eternity in the moment of supreme ecstasy that is gained in the consummation of love.

The spiritual attitude of Madame de Noailles is purely hedonistic, in the best sense of the term. She is one for whom the visible world alone exists; and if the horizons of her universe lie beyond the reaches of our less gifted eyes, they are none the less visible to her own. She knows no other destiny than life: a long and often wearisome journey, redeemed by an occasional moment of joy when two souls meet and find a fleeting strength in one another; and at the end, closed by the long slumber of death, to which finality and inviolability lend a higher dignity than can be found anywhere in life. She knows no other heaven than the consummation of a love long ardently desired and all but despaired of; and to her, the whole of life is but a preparation for and a progression to this moment of supreme climax. Love to her is the

whole realization of earth and heaven and hell. When she writes of the woods, it is of the growth of young fruit trees to their time of blossom; when she describes a garden, it becomes the setting of an amorous encounter; when she cries aloud to God, it is the Goat Foot who draws her sighs through his twin pipes and scatters them in showers of arid melody over his native forests.

Yet despite the directness of her phrase, the complexities and the contradictions peculiar to our times are incessantly present in the spirit of Madame de Noailles. She is incurably afflicted with discontent, and it is only in dreams that she can find a perfect satisfaction. Filled with a goading nostalgia for beauty, she seeks it everywhere; but she looks for it, not directly in Nature or in the face of the beloved, but in their reflections upon the clear mirror of her own spirit. Her impressions are entirely sensual, and in her extraordinary susceptibility to physical beauty, she often expresses a spiritual implication which one feels must lie outside her normal perceptions. She is a Romantic, yet the end of all her work is to lift the veil of crass reality that disfigures the physical universe and to reveal the actual reality of romance. She seeks beauty, moreover, not for the sake of its transient delights, but in order to wrest from it some fragment of immortality; and although she conceives death as an escape from the brutal literalness of life, she stands in mortal terror of annihilation. She is intellectually persuaded that the heritage of life is disappointment and despair, and that all loveliness must ultimately perish, yet the sheer physical vitality of her spirit confounds her pessimism and returns her song to the eternal canticle of love.

PAUL VALÉRY

IN its election of Paul Valéry to the seat made vacant by the death of Anatole France, the French Academy has acted with a perspicacity not ordinarily to be expected of that august body. As Edmund Wilson has observed, France and Valéry, each his own way, are distinctly representative of the artistic generations divided by the cataclysm of the war, which are as different, in their respective character and purposes, as are the literary methods and attitudes of the two writers in question. "In the very difference between the kinds of reputation which France and Valéry have won," writes Mr. Wilson, "the difference between the two periods appears. Anatole France was a popular writer, sold on all the bookstalls of France and known all over the civilized world; Valéry, though lately designated by a vote among French men of letters as the greatest living French poet, is read chiefly by other writers, and his poems have had so little sale that they are at present all out of print. France was voluminous and lucid: he used to advise Monsieur Brousson to remember that they were 'writing for the bourgeois,' and by himself he provided the reading public with a whole literature—history, satire, literary criticism, love stories, poetry, plays, philosophy, and propaganda. Paul Valéry publishes little and is difficult: his whole genius has been concentrated to the production of a few elaborate and magnificent poems; his miscellaneous prose writings

fill only about three volumes. He has a horror of facility: his poetry is definitive and intense; his prose he publishes with apologies. And where France was occupied with the attempt to resolve the incongruities and discords of life into the simplicity and the harmony at least of a logical style, Valéry has set himself the task of reproducing in his very language the complexities and the confusions of interacting emotions and ideas, at the same time that he labors to mold them into a marmoreal solidity. Furthermore, the phenomena with which France deals are usually the phenomena of life as it is lived in the world; whereas, with Valéry, it is always a question either of the isolated or of the ideal human mind, studying its own contradictions and admiring its own flights."

It would be an instructive discursion to pursue this comparison further, but to do so would be to shirk the vexing task before us. Paul Valéry, equally in his prose and in his verse, is the most difficult of poets, the most abstruse of metaphysicians. Even so expert a critic as Albert Thibaudet, the commentator of Mallarmé, proves, in a score of fundamental points other than his fatal association of certain of the poet's ideas with those of Bergson, whose works Valéry has not read, that he has not understood Mallarmé's far greater heir. Pierre Lièvre has hardly touched the lintels of Valéry's doorpost in his short monograph. Alfred Droin, the post-classicist of *La Jonque Victorieuse*, has permitted himself to become so outraged, in the polemic of his *Paul Valéry et la Tradition Poétique Française*, that his argument ends in puerility. T. S. Eliot, most disappointingly, has not even clarified our intuitive conclusions in the essay on Valéry with which he prefaces Mark Wardle's valiant attempt to

translate *Le Serpent*; much less has he added anything to our understanding of the poet. Edmund Wilson, who, in the temporary incompetence of Mr. Eliot, might reasonably be expected to come closer to a discovery of the mystery than any other American critic, has thus far contented himself with the luminous but limited comparison which we have cited above and with pointing out some of the errors of Valéry's other critics.

The truth is, that criticism can accomplish little toward elucidating an art at once so finished, so profound, so definitive, and so perfectly lucid within itself as that of Paul Valéry. All that can possibly be said of Valéry's ideas has already been fully expressed in his own prose and verse: and when the first Rubicon of understanding has been passed, the rest is not a difficult conquest. It would be as absurd to pretend that Valéry is easy reading as it indubitably is evasive to fancy that commentaries are needed to explain him. He has deliberately sublimated his thought and complicated its expression to a degree which, at the first encounter, the brain, emasculated by too much facility, finds almost confounding. Then ensues an intellectual game which, for the sheer exhilaration of the sport and the worthiness of the reward, is without equal in the literature of contemporary Europe. One is confronted by a pure intellect that has achieved integrity through a tortuous sequence of distinctions and relationships. One is filled with the need to penetrate and to participate in its austere isolation. The intellect resists this invasion, by every subterfuge of abstraction. Then, one by one, the antagonist captures the keys to its high place. And when one has traversed a certain distance, the other doors open of themselves, and one beholds, in the

writings of Paul Valéry, a miraculously calm and assured awareness of those hidden motives of the modern mind which others have lacked the hardihood to interrogate.

All this is not hyperbole, however perilously it skirts that offense. Valéry has penetrated certain recesses of the mind and spirit more cunningly than any literary or philosophical adventurer before him. This was the Faustian occupation of his fifteen years' retirement from literature. Born at Cette (although a Southerner, since his family came from Montpellier) in 1872, he had gone to Paris at the age of twenty, and had shortly become one of the now celebrated group which gathered of yore in the dining-room in the Rue de Rome on Stéphane Mallarmé's Tuesday evenings. In 1889, Valéry's first poems appeared in *La Conque*, the interesting little literary review published by his lifelong friend, the Hellenist Pierre Louÿs, who was then another promising youth, two years older than Valéry. A few more verses were hesitantly published in a similar journal which Valéry himself edited. The influence of the Symbolists, of Mallarmé and Moréas, and above all, Rimbaud, is easily seen in the "abstract firmness" of these poems; but it is an influence clearly united with the classical quality, aspired to unsuccessfully by the Neo-Parnassians, which Valéry seems to have inherited, through Malherbe, directly from Racine. These are the poems which he collected in 1921 into the volume entitled *L'Album de Vers Anciens*.

The few who knew of Valéry's work regarded this young man as one of the most promising of the group gathered about Mallarmé. But he was already discontented with the aims of Symbolism, already meditating the vast conquest of his own spirit. "What was baptized

Symbolism," he writes, in his introduction to the poems of Lucien Fabre, *Connaissance de la Déesse*, "is summarized simply in the intention, common to several groups of poets (at enmity, moreover, among themselves), to regain for poetry the province usurped by music. . . . We were brought up on music, and our literary heads dreamed only of deriving from language almost the same effects which purely sonorous periods produced upon our nervous system." In this much, since he possessed the gift of language, Valéry had no difficulty in joining with his peers. But this, he rightly considered, was only the beginning. There remained certain harmonies of the mind which he must yet discover and embrace within himself. So he turned to speculation.

Valéry's *Introduction à la Méthode de Leonardo da Vinci* indicates, in a sense, the immediate destination of this quest, in the example of the great Renaissance painter, who was also a sculptor, a military engineer, an hydrolician, a mathematician, a philosopher, a courtier, and an adept at the fashioning of mechanical toys. "Where others were incapable of seeing, he had looked and combined; yet he did no more than to read in his own mind." "It is easy to become universal," Leonardo had said: and in this intellectual prodigy, in the variety of his gifts and the perfection and balance of his talents, Valéry perceived, at the age of twenty-three, an attainable physical hypothesis of what genius ought to be; in a word, Leonardo represented to him a man who stood as "a complete system in himself," and thereby approached the poet's own ideal of perfectibility.

In *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste*, Valéry gives a figurative embodiment to the philosophical conceptions

which the contemplation of Leonardo da Vinci's example had awakened in his mind. Valéry's Monsieur Teste is a godlike anomaly, born of physics and of a proposition in calculus. He is exempt from that crucifixion of the flesh, the need to possess mystically, for he believes that love consists merely in the ability of two persons to be beasts together. He is magnificently useless, knowing the vanity of all effort, aiming at nothing, keeping his own counsel, sharing none of his meditations, admitting no one to the sanctuary of his spirit, and contented to die without heirs. He exists as an idea can only exist in its first purity, as an intellectual abstraction, contaminated by none of the aspirations and disturbing ferments which destroy it in accomplishment. "He was the being absorbed in his variation, he who becomes his system, he who gives himself entirely to the terrifying discipline of the free mind and who makes his joys kill his joys, the weakest by the strongest—the gentlest, the temporal, that of the moment and of the hour begun by that which is fundamental—by the hope of the fundamental." And so Teste dwells in the austere solitude of his originality. His wife writes of him: "He is so strange! In truth, one cannot say anything about him that will not be inexact at the moment of speech! . . . I think there is too much continuity in his ideas. He bewilders you at every step in a web which he alone knows how to weave, to break, to take up again. He prolongs within himself threads so fragile that they refrain from snapping only with the help and contrivance of all his vital power. He draws them across I know not what personal gulfs, and he dares to stray, no doubt, far out of ordinary time into some abyss of difficulty. I wonder what happens to him there? It is

clear that one is no longer oneself under such constraint. Our humanity cannot follow us toward lights so far removed. Doubtless his soul becomes a singular plant whose roots—though not its leaves—grow, contrary to Nature, toward the light! Is this not to reach out of the world? Will he find life or death at the end of his attentive will? Will it be God, or some frightful sensation of encountering, at the deepest depth of thought, only the pale glimmer of his own and miserable matter? One must have seen him in these excesses of absence in order to appreciate them! A little more of this absorption, and I am sure he would render himself invisible. . . ." Later, she confides: "These are very difficult moments. But what am I to do? I take refuge in my heart, where I love him in the way I please."

"To find is nothing," says Monsieur Teste. "What is difficult is to assimilate what one has found." It was for the purpose of investigating intellectual relationships, of absorbing them into himself, and otherwise setting his mind in order, that Valéry undertook his long vigil of silence. "I end by holding the disorder of my mind sacred," Rimbaud had affirmed. "The human mind seems to me so constituted as to be incapable of incoherency for itself," Valéry has responded. In the course of these fifteen years, Valéry found the coherency, the correspondence, the integrity, which he desired. "By dint of constructing, I honestly believe I have constructed myself," cries his Eupalinos. "I have told you that I was born several, and that I died one," he makes Sokrates say in the same discourse. "A number of Sokrateses were born with me, from whom, little by little, the Sokrates destined to the magistrates and to the hemlock detached himself."

When, in 1917, at the insistence of André Gide, and after years of constant entreaty by Pierre Louÿs, Paul Valéry emerged from his self-imposed obscurity and published the first of his philosophical poems, *La Jeune Parque*, literary Europe knew that a great philosophical poet had arisen. The succession of Valéry's books as they appeared—*Odes* in 1920, *L'Album de Vers Anciens* in 1921, *Fragments du Narcisse* in 1922, and *Poésies* in 1923—substantiated this first admiration. The verse of Paul Valéry represents, as Mr. Eliot says, "the reintegration of the Symbolist movement into the great tradition" of French poetry. It is, moreover, in itself great poetry—philosophical poetry, filled with a purely intellectual emotion, eschewing intuition for knowledge and inspiration for deliberate art, but distinctly traditional and, as distinctly, poetry for our new age of consciousness. The publication of *Variété*, which includes his philosophical essays—"La Crise de l'Esprit," the most significant study yet published of the post-war European mind, and the early considerations of Leonardo da Vinci, La Fontaine's *Adonis*, Poe's *Eureka*, and Pascal's point of frustration,—all, strangely enough, essays originally written upon the order of publishers—proved Valéry to be a writer of prose not less distinguished than his verse. Somewhere amid the tortured mazes of thought which the image of a Leonardo or a Sokrates, a Serpent or a Fate, suggests to him, somewhere amid the endless discursion of his philosophical-metaphysical monologues, there is hidden the secret that Paul Valéry has surmised, but not yet quite penetrated—the equation of integrity which, when it is accidentally resolved in a human being,

produces genius. It is the uttermost Sangraal, to discover which would be to complete, at one stroke, the cycle of human progress. The intellect of man has not conceived a higher, more audacious, or more magnificently hopeless quest than this.

AZORIN

IN the thirty-odd years which separate Azorín's first book, *Moratin*, from his *Una Hora de España*, one generation of Spanish writers has matured, spoken its destined lines, and given place to another. The implacable, self-searching, despairing Realists of the much denied Generation of 1898, since that time have sounded the abysses of Naturalism and, arising thence to more fruitful planes of creation, have broken up into a dozen artistic groups. The long desolation of its lethargy and its perverse isolation past, Spanish literature, through the efforts and the faith of those men and of their successors, now progresses through a transitional period which already gives rich promise for the future. And Azorín himself, still in his prime, although one of the valiant of that early group, has become so famous under his pseudonym that the world had forgotten that he is really José Martínez Ruiz until his election to the Real Academia Española lent that name a formal dignity; and the suave beauty and pungent brilliance of his most recent books, *Los Dos Luises*, *Don Juan*, *El Chirrión de los Políticos* and *Una Hora de España* prove conclusively that he is still far from having said his last word.

In an essay belatedly reprinted in *Clásicos y Modernos*, Azorín thus summarizes the ideal of the Generation of 1898: "Each thing in written language must be named by its exact name; periphrases and circumlocutions will embarrass, hamper, and obscure style. But, in order to

name each thing by its name, we must know the names of things. If we consider a house or the countryside, we will find hundreds of objects, details, and aspects, tastes and occupations, which we cannot name. And yet, all these things have or have had a name; and we must learn and use those names. If they exist in the language of the people, let us transfer them without hesitation to literary language; if they exist in old books, in the classics, let us unearth them straightway."

Under the influence of Pérez Galdós, to whom, as Azorín says, "the new generation of writers owes the very essence of its being," these serious young men flew to their pens in a literary insurrection which, considering the circumstances and the peculiarities of the Spanish character, was remarkably audacious and irreligious. They attacked artifice and artificiality everywhere, scorned the classic beauties of the Castilian literary tradition, and strove, with desperate earnestness, to be sincere and to speak the whole truth, as each conceived it, concerning their world and themselves. Divers heads were broken in the contest; the newspapers flamed with denunciations and counter-accusations, and bruised eyes contemplated the gray world ruefully. The rebels of 1898 went back, by the inevitable process of those who would clear the atmosphere of conventional artifices which repetition has rendered meaningless, to the bluff directness of the primitives. At first, they fell into the same errors of redundancy as the early French Naturalists: and the soundness of Azorín's scholarship and the precision of his sense of style did not save him, in his earliest works, from participation in this common abuse. *Moratin* is as filled with posture and extraneous detail as it is with

promise: but the author was then a twenty-year-old rebel, groping in the dark. He had not yet observed that economy of means and the exclusion of data are the most expressive elements in primitive art, and he had not as yet more than surmised the foundations of the harmoniously proportioned style for which his later works will deserve to be read long after their intrinsic value has passed. The seven years in which *El Alma Castellana* was in preparation, brought the artist in Azorín to the fore; and when his philosophical novel, *La Voluntad*, was published, in 1902, two years after *El Alma Castellana*, it was no longer possible to doubt the true quality of his talent.

La Voluntad established Azorín's reputation, as well as defined the main direction of his mature work. He had previously appeared as an energetic, iconoclastic, decidedly impudent young critic from the Basque country, advancing a literary ideal abhorrent to all that was traditional, and meanwhile busily revaluing the classics according to his new standards, with occasionally devastating results. *La Voluntad* is Azorín's finest tribute (save *Don Juan*) to the consolations of philosophy, and his first libation to the deities of reticence. The novel is fine—and it remains so—for the contemplative drama which all that it leaves unsaid provokes in the reader's mind. The protagonist and his philosophical companion, Yuste, talk interminably in a small provincial town. They do little else than talk, but there is no need for more, for their talk is perfect.

And this is the essence of Azorín's art. He talks perfectly. His thought is a clear stream and his style, a pure and malleable instrument. The defects of *La Voluntad* as a novel, the too detailed meticulousness of *Antonio*

Azorín, which followed it in the next year, and of *Las Confesiones de un Pequeño Filósofo*, do not matter. These are novels, if they are really novels at all, of character, rather than of action; and as such, they remain as vivid and engaging as upon the day of publication. But in their true nature, they are philosophical discursions, realistically treated in the elements of protagonists, setting, and incident; detailed critical essays in Azorín's best style. So, likewise, are his Spanish travel sketches, *Los Pueblos*, *La Ruta de Don Quijote*, *España: Hombres y Paisajes*, *Castilla*, *Un Pueblecito* and *El Paisaje de España*. So, likewise, even his political writings, such as *El Político*, *El Parlamentarismo Español* and *El Chirrión de los Políticos*. So even that little narrative masterpiece of his later years, *Don Juan*.

In the writings of Azorín, criticism arises to the dignity of a personal art. He had begun by denying that literature exists, except as a faithful annotation of life: and when the artist in him had driven the iconoclast back to the serene Castilian tradition, the mature Azorín appeared as a tender, but acrid, investigator of the human spirit. He perceived, then, that literature is a refinement of life, the distillation of a precious essence which it is fatal to contaminate by admixture of the raw substances of the retort. But he also perceived, with Unamuno, that "the humblest, most obscure life is worth infinitely more than the greatest work of art." With this conviction to illuminate his broad scholarship, his exceptional literary gifts, and the spirit of upright and independent inquiry which he brought to his work, Azorín could not well have missed distinction. He has observed life as the material from which literature has and shall presently be made.

He has perceived literature as a living body, in which every book contains something of its author's closest spirit and every character that of his neighbor, his brother in the mystery of life. "Art," he says, in *Clásicos y Modernos*, "is life. When the artist feels and expresses life, he reaches the deepest purity of style, however full that style may be of barbarisms or incorrect expressions; then he becomes a great prose writer or a great poet, because he gives us the utmost that prose or verse can provide: which is, emotion."

From these attitudes, Azorín has arrived at his unique method of criticism. He is no longer sharp, as he was in his youth, for understanding has mellowed the whole of life to him and forgiven all things in his sight: and a book not worthy of praise, he does not deem fit to write about at all. His appreciation of living writers is alert and generous, but his heart is with the—but only the veritable!—classics. It is in his revaluations, his reconstructions, his evocations of the classics, that Azorín has done, if not his most valuable, at least, his most permanently interesting work. Aubrey F. G. Bell puts it neatly: "When he turned to the evocation of ancient writers ('to bring into the light works which are as yet imperfectly appreciated by their readers,' as he says in *Al Margen de los Clásicos*'), his method had not really changed; he had merely substituted old Spanish folios for old Spanish towns, and continued his delicate reconstruction of life and literature."

This method of, so to speak, literary assaying by the reconstruction of dust-laden masterpieces for the modern reader, gives all that is truly fine in literature a life, beneath his subtle touch, beyond the death which pedan-

try and the ages have set upon it. Azorín, although his scholarship stands unquestioned, has little use for dates, for bibliography, philology, and the lichen-grown accouterments of scientific classical criticism. He probes for two things alone: for the spirit which inspires and the spirit which is contained in a work of art. His essays, from the first of what we may term his mature period—those in *Lecturas Españolas, Clásicos y Modernos, Los Valores Literarios, Al Margen de los Clásicos, Rivas y Larra, Los Dos Luises*—whether their subjects chance to be modern or classical, are all in this manner, all seeking in the end this precious and elusive substance.

Like a skillful engraver, Azorín etches in, first the main outlines of the composition before him, and then, its essential detail, adding here and there a shading of his own, and refining the whole through that delicate instrument which, in the lack of a better term, we must call his artistic consciousness—until the picture, as it emerges, is a miniature which does not so much preserve the likeness of the original as it vividly projects those fundamental human elements, those moments of greatness, those underlying impulses, which are the cause why books are written and why they are read, but which we do not at once perceive because they are so often overlaid with the drosses of style and of the flesh. It may be a single incident in one novel, an isolated minor character in a second, or an indefinite spirit coloring a third; but if it is there, Azorín discovers it; and once it is found, it is sufficient to pardon even the commercialism of a Blasco Ibáñez. To discover this concealed virtue is Azorín's special genius, and in this it must be said that, within his limitations, no one has succeeded quite as well as he.

FRANCIS JAMMES

WHEN one speaks of a poet as "well loved" or as a "favorite bard of simple things and homely virtues," one is not always seeking to condone a particular type of mediocrity which happens to appeal to him. Despite the thriving, if modest, school of Robert Frost, we have somewhat lost sight, in this day of neurotic exacerbations, of the proved truth that verse does not have to be tormented to be beautiful. The idyllic scenes of Whittier have in them more of pure loveliness than many of the most rapturous clamors of the sadistic school of English poetry; and there are also the classic examples of Hesiod's *Works and Days* and the *Georgics* of Vergil, which contain more essential poetry than the *Æneid* or the *Eclogues*. So we have no need to apologize for Francis Jammes when we say that, in our discordant age, there is no voice as sweet and tender, as utterly homely as his has been.

"Let us give to men, to be their judges, Irony and Pity," says Anatole France, in *Le Lys Rouge*. These are the judges that Jammes gives, not to men alone, but to all the creatures of the earth—to the infinite advantage of the latter. He loves the skies and the waters, the asses and the dogs, the kingfishers, the periwinkles, and the long tresses of the fields, better than any poet since the Greeks has loved them. They have rewarded him, as only love can reward a poetaster, by making him a poet. An indifferent student, a botanist, zoölogist, and ornithologist

with more enthusiasm than learning, Jammes has become, so to speak, the Thoreau of France. "My style stammers, but I have told my truth," he says, in the dedication of his first volume of *Vers*, published privately in 1893, at Orthez, the little village in the Basses-Pyrénées which is still his home. That is the important thing; and despite the faults of his style, this simple quality of expressiveness of his particular truth has made Francis Jammes a poet certain to be remembered beyond his generation: an original, and an originator.

Jammes's intense sensitiveness to every feature of pastoral life, his profound apprehension of visible Nature, his spiritual and physical perceptions, his healthy sensuousness, his deep contentment with his lot, the simplicity of all his emotional responses, and his extraordinary faculty of objective and ironical, yet sympathetic, observation, brought this more or less untutored French provincial, from his first scribblings, to an attitude of mind and spirit perfectly designed for the utterance of poetic truth. If the sentiment of love finds its most sublime utterance in poetry, every line that Jammes has written is filled with love—with the love of life, the love of every tree and flower and blade of grass, the love of every animal, the love of every man, except, perhaps, the apothecaries of Orthez. These sentiments he feels spontaneously; and he records them spontaneously, without affectation, without obedience to, or revolt from, the precept of any existing school—although the perfect naturalness of his verse was the last blow to the Neo-Parnassian revival of 1895, and although the benefits of his influence are clearly perceived in such dissimilar productions as *Le Coeur Solitaire* and *Le Semeur de Cendres* of Charles Guérin and *Le Coeur Innombrable* of Madame

de Noailles. In his rich, playful humor, Jammes has had neither inheritors nor predecessors. The French have had wit in plenty, but they have never before produced humor as delicious and earthy as his.

Jammes has told much of himself in his books—in “Un Jour,” “La Naissance du Poète” and “La Mort du Poète,” in the volume *De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir*; in “Le Poète et sa Femme,” in *Clairières dans le Ciel*, and in scores of his shorter poems. But he has not explained his genealogy as an artist. There is no need to do that, for he is a natural singer; and it was clearly the irrepressibility of his gift alone that transformed the young solicitor's clerk of Orthez into the beloved sexagenarian of French poetry. Jammes was born, on the 2d of December 1868, at Tournay, in the Hautes-Pyrénées, of a substantial bourgeois family of that region. His great-grandfather had been a notary in the town of Albi; his grandfather, a physician, had migrated to the West Indies, where he had married a Creole woman of good family, and was eventually ruined by the earthquake of La Pointe-à-Pitre. Jammes has inscribed a poem to this ancestor, whose far wanderings beckoned the poet toward the enchanting course made luminous and delectable by the imaginary peregrinations of his great similar, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre:

“Tu écrivais que tu chassais des rapiers
dans les bois de la Goyave,
et le médecin qui te soignait écrivait,
peu avant ta mort, sur ta vie grave.

“Il vit, disait-il, en Caraïbe, dans ses bois.
Tu es le père de mon père.
Ta vieille correspondance est dans mon tiroir
et ta vie est amère.

"Tu partis d'Orthez comme docteur-médecin,
pour faire fortune là-bas.

On recevait de tes lettres par un marin,
par le capitaine Folat.

"Tu fus ruiné par les tremblements de terre
dans ce pays où l'on buvait
l'eau de pluie des cuves, lourde, malsaine, amère . . .
Et tout cela, tu l'écrivais.

"Et tu avais acheté une pharmacie.
Tu écrivais: 'La Métropole
n'en a pas de pareille.' Et tu disais: 'Ma vie
m'a rendu comme un vrai créole.'

"Tu es enterré, là-bas, je crois, à la Goyave.
Et moi j'écris où tu es né:
ta vieille correspondance est très triste et grave.
Elle est dans ma commode, à clef."

Upon the death of his mother and father, the son of this man, then a child of five years, was sent to Orthez, to be cared for by his aunts. This was the father of Francis Jammes, who married a good woman of the province and removed to Tournay, where he earned a modest livelihood as a notary until his appointment as Keeper of Records at Bordeaux made it possible for him to go to that city, where his son might enjoy the advantages of the University. But Francis Jammes proved only a languid scholar, and, instead of studying his Roman Code, he haunted the wharves and picked up odd bits of botanical lore at the public parks. When his father died, young Jammes forgot the legal career that had been planned for him and returned, with his mother, for whom he cherished a tender sentiment, to the ancestral cottage

at Orthez, which Charles Guérin has celebrated in his poem:

“O Jammes, ta maison ressemble à ton visage.
Une barbe de lierre y grimpe, un pin l'ombrage
Eternellement jeune et dru comme ton cœur . . .”

There he has remained ever since, anxiously preserving himself from the contaminations of the city. He was married about 1906, and his poems to his wife and to his young daughter are inexpressibly tender. His prose record of this daughter's daily life, *Ma Fille Bernadette*, is one of the most charming modern contributions to the literature of childhood.

The literary accomplishment of Francis Jammes is divided sharply into two periods by his reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church, which occurred about 1902, a short time after the return of Paul Claudel from his sojourn in the Orient. With his second conversion, Jammes began to mistrust the healthy sensuousness and the whimsicality which had made his earlier work particularly cherishable and unique. In curbing these native impulses, and in turning his quest from the love of life and visible beauty to the love of God, he lost an element of natural vigor and a robust earthy tang which his work has not compensated in the contemplation of higher excellences. This is the false note which renders insipid *Les Géorgiques Chrétiennes*, the work which he, as the only poet of contemporary France competent to essay such a theme, ought to have made his masterpiece.

We may not pause here to discuss Jammes's contribution to the Neo-Catholic revival in France, but we may observe, with some abstract justice, that the poet's early

devotion to Rousseau—whose *Confessions* he formerly called “son livre ami”—was a more invigorating influence in his art than his later devotion to the doctrines of Catholicism. What Jammes lost in vitality, however, he more than gained in spiritual beauty; and if one would seek for a Saint Francis of Assisi in the modern world, one would find the humble counterpart of the saint in his French name-son. One cannot read the poems collected in *Clairières dans le Ciel*, for example, without being aware of the moral greatness of their author; but where has vanished the simplicity and the humanity of *Quatorze Prières*? We cannot resist the temptation to translate one of them, the “*Prière pour Aller au Paradis avec les Anes*”:

“When my time comes, O God, to go to thee,
Upon a festal day then let it be,
When fields are filled with dust; I wish to go
By any road I please, as I go here,
To Paradise, where stars shine all day long.
Taking my stick, I'll seek the broad highway,
And to my friends, the asses, I shall say:
My name is Jammes; I go to Paradise,
Because there is no hell in God's good land.
I'll say: Come, gentle friends of azure skies,
Poor, precious beasts, whose twitching ears brush off
The silver flies, the bees, the cruel blows . . .

“Grant I may come to thee among these beasts
That I so love, because they hang their heads
Gently and, halting, put their little feet
Together thus, so pitiful and sweet.
Let me approach amid their million ears,
Followed by those with baskets on their flanks,
By those who draw the carts of acrobats,
Or bear a huckster's truck upon their backs;

She-asses, full as gourds, with halting steps,
And those who wear quaint breeches, made to stanch
The ooze of blue sores bit by stubborn flies.
Grant that these asses come with me, my God,
Grant that in peace the angels may conduct
Both me and them to tufted streams where trees
Tremble like laughing flesh of tender maids;
And grant that, as I then shall bend above
The heavenly waters of that place of souls,
I may become as these same patient beasts,
Who mirror humble, gentle poverty
In the clear waters of eternal love."

Yet, the spirit of his later poems is as noble and admirable in the consciousness of a destiny. In the dedication of a late edition of the most personal of his books, *De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir*, the poet writes: "My God, you have called me among men. Here I am. I suffer and I love. I have spoken with the voice which you have given me. I have written with the words that you taught my father and mother, and which they have transmitted to me. I pass upon the road like a laden ass at whom the children laugh, and who lowers his head. I will go where you will, when you will." For Jammes has two magnificent gifts, which nothing can take away from him. These are courage and, above all, love.

It is a common observation that most superior poets are deprived of the gift of writing fine prose, but that the occasional exceptions to this rule produce prose of exceptional beauty and power. While the prose of Francis Jammes is by no means to be compared with that of the English poets, some observation of this nature may certainly be made of it, for Jammes has carried into his prose many of the finest qualities of his exceedingly

orderly and provocative verse. Jammes had been occupied with the idea of metrical romance since his first appearance as a poet, and his early self-revealing narratives had been somewhat in this character. In 1899, he wrote *La Jeune Fille Nue*, and the two long narrative poems in *La Triomphe de la Vie*, "Jean de Noarrieu" and "Existences," record his finest development of this genre. He early began to write prose, and his first prose romance, *Clara d'Ellébeuse ou l'Histoire d'une Ancienne Jeune Fille*, first appeared in 1899, to be followed, two years later, by *Almaïde d'Etreumont ou l'Histoire d'une Jeune Fille Passionnée*, both of which were later republished, with additional stories and with Jammes's sensitive essay on Rousseau, in the volume entitled *Le Roman du Lièvre*. This series of romances was completed in 1904 by the publication of *Pomme d'Anis ou l'Histoire d'une Jeune Fille Infirme*, which was reissued in 1913, in the volume in which the poet's best prose is to be found, *Feuilles dans le Vent*. Most of Jammes's writings, as age has come upon him and as he has drifted out of the current of his times and closer to the sheltering bosom of the Church, have been in prose; and his achievements in what may be termed lyrical fiction constitute, in a sense, a third and final phase of his work.

The recent work of Francis Jammes has declined lamentably. The reticences of strict religious obedience, the disturbances of the war, and the sad ravages of advancing age, have combined to relegate this once renowned poet to the limbo of those anachronistic reputations respected but unread. Jammes, having given the coup de grâce to a school of pernicious artificiality, having written better bucolic poetry than any Frenchman

except Mistral, having influenced the art of scores of poets, one (Madame de Noailles) even greater than himself, and having been proclaimed the inspirer of a group with which he had nothing in common, has fallen upon the same misfortune as many other French poets of his generation—he has become religious, and religion has confined his spirit, diluted his style, and taken the poetry out of him. He is happier in his desuetude, perhaps, although he was happy before, when his God lived for him in the smile of the skies and the blue of the periwinkles; but he is less readable, and he is no longer Jammes. And, since we loved that very human Francis Jammes, our brother and friend, we may be forgiven if we refuse commerce with his pious shadow.

CHARLES PÉGUY

IT is difficult, in estimating the contribution of Charles Péguy to French literature and to the French spirit, to escape the temptation to overemphasis which has caused most of his contemporaries to invest this lovable and significant figure with the same sort of monumental halo which adorns the metaphorical brow of his compatriot of Orléans, Jeanne d'Arc. It is equally difficult to avoid making anew the perfectly obvious critical discovery that neither the extent nor the quality of Péguy's published writings in any way justifies the ample proportions of his reputation.

The case of Péguy is, precisely, neither purely literary nor purely political. It is the problem of a situation of the spirit, and, in view of Péguy's instinctively social attitude, it appears as an individual problem with a broad national application. For Péguy, perhaps more completely than any other man, typifies the transitional generation with which he reached maturity—the generation of national rediscovery, of Tolstoyan idealism, of Dreyfusian liberalism, and of the Neo-Catholic revival. A modest and impoverished bookseller, the son of a good old woman who mended the rush chairs of the Cathedral of Orléans for her scanty livelihood, he became the center of an important group and, for a time, its immediate means of expression. A writer of eccentric and ambiguous talent, filled with lofty but queerly twisted ideas which poured forth in his prose and verse in an unruly torrent of im-

possible and unheard-of constructions, yet shot through with facets of pure genius, his pronunciamientos lent a constant direction to this whole activity. His late return to Catholicism, the singular manner of his conformity, and finally, his death in action as a "champion of peace," on the Marne, on the 5th of September 1914, complete the cycle of forces which has fixed Charles Péguy in the popular mind as a symbolical archetype and a national saint.

This mantle of greatness was not of Péguy's weaving, nor of the Norns'. It came to him as the shroud prepared, in part, by patriotic hysteria for the French Rupert Brooke, and in part, by the tenderness of the hero's friends for their adored leader. It was an unsubstantial greatness, which Péguy did not ask of life, which he did not deserve, and which has already faded. Péguy himself, although he hid not his light and passionately longed for fame, was a modest and humble man. He was born in 1873, in the suburbs of Orléans, where his mother, a clever, courageous little widow, well schooled of necessity in the ingenious shifts by which the French provincial keeps the wolf from the door, had managed to acquire several small tenements. At the age of sixteen, by dint of hard study and by a stroke of apparently marvelous good fortune, he managed to win a scholarship at the Lycée Sainte-Barbe, in Paris.

It was there, as a raw, frightened peasant lad, fearfully abashed in the presence of so many marvels, desperately homesick, but filled with a callow and insatiable curiosity, that Péguy first met his future friends and biographers, the brothers Jérôme and Jean Tharaud, and others whose paths in life were to lay parallel to his own. The atmos-

phere of the decade was tense with the incipient idealisms which were to flourish in the generation then coming to maturity; and Péguy, at Sainte-Barbe, soon embraced them all. In 1894, he passed on, with the Tharauds, to the Ecole Normale Supérieure; and during the two years that he spent there, he discovered his life's high, if erratic, mission.

In his nostalgic first months at Sainte-Barbe, Péguy had thought much of the community of poor but contented peasants and workingmen who lived in his mother's tenements at Orléans, contrasting their simplicity, their blank poverty, their piety, and their contentment with the harsh contrasts, the inflation, the false ideals, and the disturbing complexity of life in the great metropolis. At the same time, he became interested in the Socialist movement. But the historical materialism of Marx, filtering through the close grains of Péguy's strange and ecstatic personality, became an indescribable essence of Franciscan idealism and simple fellow-love. An accident of chance and a perversely obstinate misunderstanding set this rapidly maturing spirit in action and provided Péguy's career with a wholly characteristic beginning.

At Sainte-Barbe, Péguy had become friends with a youth of his own province, one Baudouin. In the course of time, this Baudouin was called for his term of military service; and while in service, he contracted a fever and died. Péguy, although strongly anti-militarist in his sentiments, had, some time before, served out his own term in the army, and had enjoyed the experience enormously. But in one of the perverse, hidden corners of his brain, he conceived the idea that his friend had been the victim of the murderous brutality of a certain sergeant. So, ac-

accompanied by two friends, he set out for the encampment at Dreux. Interviews with the captain, the sergeant, and the dead man's comrades, made it clear that Baudouin had succumbed to a perfectly natural illness; that he had been given the best of care, and that he was remembered with affectionate regret. But Péguy was not satisfied. He had made up his mind that Baudouin was a martyr. If he was not actually a martyr to official brutality, he was a martyr to life. And he, Péguy, must devote his life to the vindication of this martyrdom.

So the spirit of the impalpable Baudouin thenceforth became the mask and invisible mentor of Péguy's spirit. In his first year at the Ecole Normale, Péguy had obtained a leave of absence, to write a book on Jeanne d'Arc. Péguy published the first version of his *Jeanne d'Arc* in the name of Baudouin. Baudouin had been a poet of sorts, so Péguy must needs become a poet, in order to sing the songs that Baudouin might have sung, had he lived. He married Baudouin's sister, so that he might raise up children to keep fresh and living the memory of their dead uncle.

Péguy's bride brought him a dowry of forty thousand francs, all the fortune that he was ever to have in his life. Leaving the Ecole Normale, he set up a Socialist bookshop in the Latin Quarter, where he exhorted his patrons so hotly on the Dreyfus affair and social wrong in general that the place was soon deserted. Then, with the remnant of his fortune, he opened another shop in the Rue de la Sorbonne, where, in 1900, he began publishing his now famous series of *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*. For fourteen years, up to the beginning of the war, he continued to publish these remarkable pamphlets, fight-

ing hard the while for the bare necessities of existence for his wife and children, and literally bludgeoning his friends and acquaintances into lending him the financial support necessary for the survival of the enterprise which he believed to presage the moral and political regeneration of France.

Péguy's energies, his genius, his life, were poured unstintingly into his *Cahiers*. In the various numbers, we find his own commentary-at-large on the political life of France and that of such men as Hubert Lagardelle, Georges Sorel, Jean Jaurès, and Georges Clemenceau. We find the first verses of René Salomé and poems by François Porché; the providential first publication of Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* and the early work of the brothers Tharaud, and contributions by Anatole France, Pierre Quillard, Daniel Halévy, Joseph Bédier, Pierre Mille, Pierre Hamp, André Spire, Julien Benda, Edmond Fleg, and many others, then little known or quite obscure, whom time has brought into their own. The catalogue of *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, considering the poverty of the enterprise and the comparative obscurity of the editor, is one of the most amazing records in the history of modern journalism.

There is so much that is utterly worthless in Péguy's voluminous writings, that it requires a considerable hardihood to penetrate the dreary deserts of his eccentric prose and his tortured philosophical verse in search of the occasional oases of clairvoyant thought and expression which they contain. Yet, in the repetitious circumlocutions of *Notre Jeunesse*, *Victor Marie Comte Hugo*, *L'Argent*, *Note sur Monsieur Bergson*, and the posthumous *Clio*, an altogether exceptional prose style is dis-

closed, which follows the very germination of the thought which it contains. "I am not at all the intellectual who descends and condescends to the people," he writes; "I am the people." And in the verbose mazes of the verse which Péguy wrote during the last four years of his life, notably "Eve," "La Mystère de la Charité," "Tapisserie de Sainte Geneviève," and "Prière pour Nous Autres Charnels," there are passages of essential poetry. For Péguy, albeit he possessed the faculty of being more exhausting than any other writer of his time, concealed beneath his eccentricity a flame of the purest inspiration.

Despite the profound disorder, the extravagance, and the spasmodic and violent character of his political thought, Péguy was truly great in his moral uprightness. For politics, he had nothing but distaste; and the uncontaminated fairness of his viewpoint, his untemperizing honesty, and his candor, caused him to withdraw from the Socialist party at the moment when he detected Jaurès, his one-time idol and friend, in an act of compromise. His whole political attitude is summed up in one of his remarks on the Dreyfus appeal: "A single illegality, a single crime, if it be universally, legally, nationally, conveniently accepted, is sufficient to dishonor an entire nation. It is the fleck of gangrene which corrupts the entire body." A philosophical anarchist, his ideals for the State were impossibly high, and he fought for them valiantly, if impractically. He possessed an exceptional gift for controversy, and kept it in constant employment. "Grumble, and keep on marching," was his motto; and he did both, to the day of his death.

Yet Péguy was hardly a constructive idealist, for he was incapable of systematic thought or action: and if he

had produced a system, he would himself have been the first to depart from it: for Péguy was, above all, an instinctive nonconformist. Even when, toward the end of his brief life, he returned to the Church, as a matter of Nationalistic principle, he refused to marry his wife properly, to have his children baptized, or to attend mass. He suited no fixed scheme, created none, and pursued his erratic path alone, uttering testy oracles and living up to each only until he had uttered another. He seems to have created little and to have written almost nothing which can be read without anguish. In some aspects, he appears as one of the most brilliant and predestined failures in modern France.

How, then, is one to account for Péguy's extraordinary, although already diminishing, reputation? By a bullet in the brain at the Battle of the Marne, so far as the general public is concerned. But, much as popular emotionalism has added to the luster of Péguy's name, the only substantial explanation of the veneration with which his memory is regarded by those who keep it green, is to be found in the hearts of the few but excellent men who came directly within the influence of his astounding personality. Superficially, Péguy is important as a Bergsonian political idealist, as one of the active forerunners of the recent French renaissance, and as a great editor. But others were all of this, and more so, and much more besides. Péguy's greatness was not a greatness of thought, of action, of expression, of any material accomplishment. It resided in some compelling but inexplicable spiritual energy which emanated from the depth and sincerity of his convictions and, communicating itself to those around him, inspired them to a type of action and expression

which Péguy himself could never have achieved. It was this quality which gave Charles Péguy the complete devotion, almost the adoration, of men whose apparent talents are so conspicuously superior to his own. He lived as the sort of free influence which stirs men to great deeds without confining them by marking a path; and it is as such that he is gratefully remembered by those whom he helped, without himself surmising the true magnitude of his service.

HENRI DE REGNIER

IN his first volume of poems, published in 1887, Henri de Régnier wrote:

“J’ai rêvé que ces vers seraient comme des fleurs
Que fait tourner la main des maîtres ciseleurs
Autour des vases d’or aux savantes ampleurs.”

How straitly he has held to this noble ideal, is patent in every line he has since written. The poems of Henri de Régnier indeed resemble those flowers which the hands of master carvers twine about golden vases of cunning dimensions. They are, more exactly, a Greek frieze or a Watteau painting, for Régnier draws the inspiration of his art equally from the springs of Hellas and from the splendid age of France. The greatest poet, in substance, of the Symbolist movement and one of the greatest poets of France, and a master of prose far superior to his more celebrated contemporary. Anatole France, Henri de Régnier stands, as artist and man, at the point where the French literary tradition achieved its perfect flowering and its most actual integrity: in the age of Louis XIV’s greatness, when the starkness of Rambouillet culture had mellowed, and decadence, luxury, and triumph had reproduced at Versailles a situation comparable to that of Athens at the time of the Peloponnesian Wars.

In order to estimate the sources of Régnier’s genius, it is necessary to understand the man. This is difficult, for Régnier has shielded the significant minutiae of his private life behind such an impenetrable reticence that even his

biographer, Jean de Gourmont, could ascertain only the scantiest facts of his career. He was born on the 28th of December 1864, at Honfleur, where his father, once a close friend of Gustave Flaubert, was Inspector of Customs. Seven years later, Henri-Charles de Régnier was appointed Receiver at Paris, whence the family removed; and at the age of ten, young Henri-François-Joseph de Régnier was entered as a student at the Collège Stanislas. He is descended by both parents from the old court aristocracy of France. This circumstance is of fundamental importance, for the art of Henri de Régnier is aristocratic in its whole essence and direction. His scene is a scene of fêtes galantes, of gracious ladies and elegant courtiers; his Hellas is a Hellas recreated by the genius of Vauban in the gardens of Versailles; his modern world, a world directly projected from those gardens and peopled by the offspring of the delicate passions which they concealed. Without the age of Louis XIV, we should have lost Henri de Régnier to literature, for his orientation is fixed in that milieu through a direct line of intervening generations. It is there that his spirit lives; and if he ventures back through the ages to the epoch of Greek mythology, or forward into the complex modern scene, it is always from thence that his journey starts and hence that it returns him again upon its accomplished circle.

In one of his novels, *Le Passé Vivant*, Régnier describes the irresistible fascination of the past for a man of his antecedents and general cast of mind. His hero is a sort of Des Esseintes, who only succeeds in being eccentric and who ends dolorously. But to an artist of Régnier's undoubtedly rational disposition, this clear interpenetra-

tion of the genius of one great age with that of another may be an extraordinarily invigorating and distinguishing influence. So it has proved with Régnier. Of the validity of his literary genius and of his modernity, there can be no doubt. Yet the past speaks to him with an intimate and eloquent voice; and he, by heeding its advice and permitting its accents to color his own, has become a greater and more versatile Fontenelle in his own age.

Régnier studied law after his graduation from the Collège Stanislas, and passed the usual examinations for the civil service. His father destined him for a diplomatic career; but later, when the true direction of the boy's talent and ambitions became apparent, he readily withdrew his own claims and encouraged his son's literary aspirations, which he could only applaud. So Henri de Régnier, as a youth, read much and wrote a little, publishing his first poems in the little review *Lutèce* under the pseudonym of Hugues Vignix, which stands in itself as a frank avowal of his early infatuation for Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny. But he also read and admired the moderns, and, as his first books were published—*Les Lendemain* in 1885, *Apaisement* in 1886, and *Sites* and *Episodes* in the two years following—as his art matured and his reputation slowly grew, he was drawn more and more into the excited, idealistic, youthful literary life of the capital. He attended Mallarmé's Tuesday evenings in the Rue de Rome, and Stuart Merrill describes him as a sort of anxious provocateur at those historic gatherings, seated always on the sofa at Mallarmé's right and keeping the Master properly stimulated for his discourse with a happy word, when his monologue languished. At the same period, he frequented the receptions of José-María

de Hérédia, whose second daughter, Marie, known to fame as the poet Gérard d'Houville, he married in 1896.

Apart from these slight facts, long since published in Amy Lowell's excellent study of Régnier in *Six French Poets*, little is known of the private life of this poet who has become and remains one of the greatest literary figures of his generation. There is perhaps little more to be known. Régnier's talent seems to have developed, gradually and normally, along a well-marked course. His means being ample, he was spared the annoyances of poverty. An aristocrat, he made his début before a world eager to receive him. Although the realistic foundations of his art, and the clarity and skepticism of his mind, prevented him from completely embracing Symbolism, he identified himself with the Symbolist movement, and eventually became the foremost poet among the younger group which had already quite freed itself from Decadence. He contributed to the active young reviews: to René Ghil's *Les Ecrits pour l'Art*, to Francis Vielé-Griffin's *Les Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, and to *La Wallonie*, of which he was himself a co-editor. This was a period of action, experimentation, and self-discovery. Régnier wrote incessantly, in a great variety of styles and forms. His literary criticism, collected in the volume *Figures et Caractères*, discloses an eager and hospitable intelligence, at once sophisticated, enterprising, and strongly entrenched in tradition, but no particularly promising critical grasp of the contemporary situation. On the contrary, his early short stories, later assembled under the title *La Canne de Jaspe* (*Le Trèfle Noir* and *Contes à Soi-Même*), gave a rich promise which their author was afterwards most completely to gratify. And

all the while, through steady, almost imperceptible stages, Régnier's poetic talent was maturing to its full stature.

Miss Lowell rightly designates 1890, the year when Régnier's *Poèmes Anciens et Romanesques* was published, as the date of the poet's complete emergence from the half-utterances of experimentation. In this volume and those which followed it in deliberate succession, *Tel Qu'en Songe*, *Aréthuse*, *Les Jeux Rustiques et Divins*, *Les Médailles d'Argile*, *La Cité des Eaux*, *La Sandale Ailée*, *Le Miroir des Heures*, and the rest, Henri de Régnier has bequeathed to French literature a rich and varied heritage, which even the generation which has honored him with unquestioning critical homage and Melchior de Vogüé's seat in the Academy does not yet esteem at its true worth. For Henri de Régnier is a poet of enduring merit. He is more than the greatest poet of the later Symbolist movement, for his identification with that movement was, in its essentials, merely youthful and temporary. He took of Symbolism what it had to offer to his unique art; and in return, he helped to join Symbolism with the main stream of the classic tradition, and perfected for its employments the fluent medium of vers libre. But his own art is distinctive and singular. "A melancholy and sumptuous poet," as Rémy de Gourmont calls him, in *Le Livre des Masques*, he "lives in an old Italian palace, where emblems and figures are written on the walls. He dreams, passing from room to room; toward evening, he descends the marble staircase and wanders about the gardens, which are paved like courts, to dream among the basins and the fountains, while the black swans seek their nests, and a peacock, solitary as

a king, seems to drink superbly of the dying pride of a golden twilight." His Romanticism, when he writes of the gardens of Versailles, of ancient palaces, of onyx columns, golden figures, forsaken trysts, and the purple twilights of vanished days, is a modern fulfillment of the Romanticism of Alfred de Vigny and André Chénier. But there is still another phase: his Hellenism, the exact quality of which Miss Lowell has perceived with extraordinary clarity. "He is also the poet of the nude," she writes. "He almost attains the chaste and cool treatment of Greek statues. Probably it is this similarity of point of view which makes him so often choose mythological subjects. But I am far from suggesting that his attitude is really Greek, in the historical and pedantic meaning of the term, but neither is it the sort of Angelica Kauffmann pastiche of Samain's 'Aux Flancs du Vase.' Rather it is the attitude of certain of our English poets in treating of classical subjects. Beaumont and Fletcher in 'The Faithful Shepherdess,' for instance, or Keats in 'Endymion' and 'The Grecian Urn.' "

This is it precisely, and this is the element which kept Régnier equally from becoming a perfect Symbolist or yet joining the Neo-Greek revival generated and so perfectly exemplified by his brother-in-law, Pierre Louÿs. He stood, amid these contrary forces, a man completely of to-day, but with an intellectual and spiritual heritage entirely of the Grand Siècle. His literary art was sufficiently self-conscious, sophisticated, and, so to speak, integrate within itself, to permit him to lend his talent to contemporary movements without being absorbed by them, and to borrow the flavor of ancient days without

permitting it to drug his modern consciousness. Thus, the art of Henri de Régner remains unique and solid amid the most diverse tendencies.

But, however highly we must rate the poetry of Henri de Régner, it is in his prose that he has achieved his most substantial triumphs. Régner, the prose artist, the writer of tales and novels, developed simultaneously with Régner, the poet. His first short stories began to appear in the early Eighteen-Nineties, in Vielé-Griffin's *Les Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*; they were published in pamphlets in 1894 and 1895, and collected in permanent form in 1897. His first novel, *La Double Maîtresse*, was published in 1900, and since then, many other novels and collections of short stories from his pen have appeared: *Les Amants Singuliers*, *Le Bon Plaisir*, *Le Mariage de Minuit*, *Les Vacances d'un Jeune Homme Sage*, *La Peur de l'Amour*, *La Flambée*, *L'Amphisbène*, *Romaine Mirmault*, *L'Escapade*, and others too numerous to mention.

The scene of Régner's novels, as his poems, is three-fold. Some are contemporary. Some are of the period of his own sentimental orientation, the Grand Siècle of France and the decadence of Venice. Others are set in ancient Greece—the Greece of Fontenelle, Landor, and Keats; the Greece of the English poets, of whom Miss Lowell speaks. All are marked, however, by a flavor distinctly French, so French, indeed, that it is doubtful if any of them could be successfully translated into English; they are marked by a sophistication resembling that of the younger Crébillon; by complete modernity of viewpoint; by occasional touches of outright ribaldry; by a deliciously satirical wit, and by a prose style which, for

sheer limpid beauty and lucid perfection, appears as a veritable apotheosis of classic French prose.

Although he has achieved admission to the French Academy and to a secure place in the literature of France, Henri de Régnier has never had a large following. His literary talent is an instrument so highly perfected and so diligently modulated and refined, and his point of view is so precious and so sophisticated, that he remains, both in his prose and verse, but especially in his verse, a writer perhaps best appreciated by other laborers in his own craft. In viewing the entirety of his works, one can too well understand the reasons contributing to his comparative obscurity to complain against it. But when one considers the extraordinary celebrity which Anatole France has gained with one-fifth of Régnier's talent and a thousandth part of his sincerity, one may be permitted to wonder how much either quality profits a man, save for his own satisfaction, in the absence of a robust commercial sense.

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

AMONG the younger novelists of France, there is none whose work affords at once greater promise and less encouragement for the hope that that promise will be achieved, than that of François Mauriac. Coming, in this curious generation which learns to write before it learns to read, somewhat late to literature, Mauriac won recognition and ardent admirers with his first novel. Fine writing is almost as scarce in France as it is in America, and when a mellow, well-balanced style is accompanied by a genuine gift of story-telling, excellent psychology, and familiar types and situations, it becomes well-nigh irresistible. So it proved with Mauriac. He wrote well; his themes were vital; he had found his orientation in the soil of his native province, and he was unimpeachably serious and circumspect before his art. Any of these attributes, in a young novelist, would constitute promise. All of them together, when found as Mauriac combines them, are enough to seduce the enthusiasm of the most cautious. So François Mauriac was hailed, upon his first conspicuous appearance, as a writer destined to great accomplishments. He may still be so destined. But, although novel after novel has come from his pen beneath the impetus of that first enthusiastic acclaim, he has not, it would seem, approached appreciably closer to a fulfillment of those generous expectations.

The rise of François Mauriac justified extravagant

hopes. One felt that in him, throughout the ordinary period of youthful endeavors, a splendid talent had been laying fallow, close to the heart of France and the well-springs of human passion, to emerge at last, mature, rounded, and full-voiced, like that of Thomas Hardy. The two volumes of poems which Mauriac published about 1911-1912 seemed but a youthful overflow of that still mysterious faculty. Even that strangely powerful, strangely revolting study of adolescent concupiscence, *L'Enfant Chargé de Chaînes*, which he published in 1913, seemed to be, so to speak, merely a testing of his wings, an approach to a style, a method, and an orientation. This story of a young Frenchman, tortured from childhood by the devils of the flesh, who, after seeking satisfaction vainly in several liaisons, enters a Jesuit cloister to purge himself of his torments, and thereafter marries his cousin in order to keep himself in that happily innocuous state, is perfectly absurd. *La Chair et le Sang* is thrice so, because it describes three protagonists suffering from the same preposterous disquietudes. But in these early efforts, Mauriac accomplished three important things. He showed himself to be the master of a literary style worthy of the great French realists. He definitely localized his art in the southwest of France: in La Lande, the place of his parental origins, and in Bordeaux, the city of his birth. Finally, he identified himself with the little group of writers who, shortly before the war, had arisen to describe what André Beaunier terms "the quest of a dogma," the inverse evolution of the spiritually starved modern from skepticism to faith—Ernest Psichari, Emile Baumann, Robert Vallery-Radot, and André Lafon—and in so doing, clearly indicated that the *via dolorosa* by

which he would lead his troubled characters back to the ancient faith was that of the passion of love.

The Catholic ascetic ideal is indeed the motivating factor of all Mauriac's work, despite the circumstance that only his first novels are directly concerned with strictly religious subjects. His unique conception of love as something terrible, disturbing, and destructive, lends an undercurrent of somber presage and irresistible significance to his themes. Thus, although *Préséances* is outwardly an excruciating satire of the snobbishness of the rich wine merchants of Bordeaux, as seen by the two superior members of their community who wish to escape its leveling influence in behalf of their own spiritual goals, the book reflects a horror of sordid ideals so passionate that it distorts an otherwise charming masterpiece of irony. *Le Baiser au Lépreux*, the finest novel of Mauriac's first creative period and the book which, upon its appearance in 1922, definitely established its author's reputation, is a serious evangelistic document, directed against the system of intellectual rejection represented in the philosophy of Nietzsche.

Le Baiser au Lépreux is a masterpiece of its kind, a gloomy and terrible novel, but one filled with strength and beauty. But Mauriac is not destined to regular excellence. *Le Fleuve de Feu* fails in substance and, as it stands, is little more than the outline of a not-too-promising romance. Daniel Trassis, a young Frenchman old in libertinage, has taken refuge from an importunate mistress in the miserable hotel of a small provincial village. There, for a time, he is the only guest, but his solitude is presently interrupted by the arrival (unchaperoned) of a young girl, Gisèle de Plailly, who immediately at-

tracts the young roué's interest by her charm and apparent innocence. Daniel, it seems, has been troubled by the reflection that, in all his conquests, he has not known the love of a virgin; he looks to Gisèle to rectify this poverty of his destiny. But his hopes are banished by the arrival of Gisèle's mentor, Lucille de Villeron, accompanied by a small child, whom the worldly-wise Daniel immediately perceives to be none other than his paragon's own. Notwithstanding his disappointment, Daniel proceeds with his conquest, which is somewhat complicated by the stubbornness of Gisèle, the presence of little Marie, and the zealous virtue of Lucille, who, like Aïssé's Madame Calandrini, is determined that, cost what it may, her friend shall not persist in error. The struggle is long, silent, and bitter; but the night preceding her departure Gisèle passes with Daniel. After that one night of abandon, Lucille carries her point. Gisèle disappears, and, after a long search, Daniel finds her in a village in the north of France, so much absorbed in prayer that she can "no longer see anything of the world." Then Daniel understands that he has lost, and he goes away. The Catholic ascetic ideal has triumphed over the lust of the flesh.

Mauriac brings to his art, not only the austerity of a pietist, but the zeal of an exorcist. His own spiritual development must have been exceptionally violent and painful. All the devils that torment the suffering flesh are familiar to him, and all of them are hateful in his sight. Born to the sackcloth and the cloister, he can see no beauty or exaltation in love, but only the torment of desire, the greed of possession, the stark hatred of conflicting personalities in an inexorably cruel struggle for

the mastery. In *Génétrix*, he describes the Félicité Cazenave of *Le Baiser au Lépreux*, now advanced to the age of seventy. After thirty-seven years of widowhood, she lives with her son in a little village in the vicinity of Landes. When her husband died, Félicité had not given herself over to grief. She had hardly wept at all; but, kissing her son, she had said: "A new life now begins for us." Fernand, a boy of thirteen years, frightened at the mystery of death, had clung to his mother then, and she had wrapped him protectingly in the strength of her maternal love. In all the years which have since passed, this attitude has remained unaltered. Fernand, at fifty, still clings with resentful helplessness to his mother, who refuses to consider him except as a child, and whose passionate jealousy lays as a blight upon his life. Knowing how he is stifled, Fernand protests, only to have his mother's contempt added to the grievous injuries which she has already done him. So, partly in anger, partly to prove that he is indeed a man, and partly in a frantic last effort to preserve himself from complete submersion, he elopes with the equally miserable governess of his neighbor.

But even before the honeymoon is over, the mother triumphs. Within a week, Fernand writes to her: "You were right. Only a mother can understand such a man as I. All other women are strangers." In less than two months after the newlyweds return to the maternal roof, Fernand has forsaken the bed of his young wife to return to the cot in the little room adjoining his mother's, which he had occupied since the day of his father's death. By a thousand ingenious torments, Mathilde's spirit is quickly crushed in this terrible household. She is, as the

old midwife says, "vowed to accidents"; and, vowed to accidents, she dies, soon after the premature delivery of her still-born child. The story opens as Mathilde lingers at the threshold of death. Fernand's impulses to attend her are constantly thwarted by his mother's limitless guile, and her death is unquestionably hastened by neglect. The mother rejoices that her son is wholly hers again, but she rejoices too soon. A strange, incomprehensible spirit has come upon Fernand as he kept vigil by the side of his dead wife. "He had waited until his fiftieth year to suffer in the cause of another. That which most men discover in their adolescence, he was learning at last, this evening . . . Mathilde's soul! Her soul concerned him little. What he wanted was to see joy dawn in the timid, frightened face of a living Mathilde." As, formerly, the jealousy of the mother had stood between the husband and the wife, in death it is Mathilde, who had been denied everything in life, who is triumphant. There is no outward change in the relationship of mother and son; but through the long days in the still house, a deadly battle is fought out between them behind the hypocrisy of commonplaces. Memories of his dead wife fill the son's mind as, angry and baffled by the inscrutable wall which now bars the familiar way to his soul, his mother daily grows more feeble, until paralysis completes the cycle of her woes. Then only does Fernand relax his frigid indifference and show her a little tenderness, and the old woman exults in her decrepitude, which has, as she fancies, restored the victory to her hands. But again she hopes too soon. "It is *she* who wishes me to be kind to you," says her son, rejecting her thanks. So, to the end, the dead wife triumphs; but when, after a tedious illness,

the mother finally dies, all her ancient power is immediately reaffirmed. "The maternal sun had hardly been extinguished when Fernand whirled in space, an earth without an orbit."

We have dwelt thus at length upon *Génétrix*, partly because of its excellence as literature, and partly because it perfectly exemplifies Mauriac's chief characteristics as an artist. *Génétrix* is considerably more than the best novel of an extremely interesting contemporary writer. It is the best short novel produced in France since the war; one of the best short novels, indeed, in the French language. A stark and terrible story, charged with the rancor of those who come too close, it describes implacable and unlovely characters, thwarted and warped by a wretched, plundering sort of love which, grimping to their very souls, torments and desolates them and fills them with cruel hate. Characters and emotions like these are hideous and, happily, infrequent, but they exist none the less; and beneath the magic of Mauriac's art, and beneath, we must add, the somber fanaticism of his point of view, they are invested with a disquieting life and imminence.

Only François Mauriac could have written such a story as *Génétrix*, but even Mauriac, it would appear, cannot write another quite like it. The novels which he has published at regular intervals since 1923 represent a conspicuous falling-off of the richly promising art which, in *Génétrix*, proved that it was capable of perfection. There is, in each of these books, a creative flaw, possibly originating in the author's attitude to life, which fatally limits their accomplishment. But *Le Désert de l'Amour* represents, for all that, a very high accomplishment within

itself. Here Mauriac is back again in the milieu which he knows and hates best—the smug, unimaginably snobbish, bigoted wine merchant bourgeoisie of Bordeaux. Unlike *Le Fleuve de Feu*, which fails chiefly because an arbitrary and fundamentally unsubstantial plot is made to carry the whole weight of the characters' conversions, *Le Désert de l'Amour* is an admirably reticent and luminous study of a group of characters who, brought together in various juxtapositions, develop their own story. Mauriac's Maria Cross is one of the most unusual heroines in French literature. She is a quaint little pedant, much given to reading and to quoting what she has read, still young, and, although not beautiful, possessed of an indefinable charm that lingers forever in the memory of the men who have loved her. But she bears, in every feature of her being, a sloth and decay which deprive her of volition, of dignity, even of the capacity of loving or suffering or being happy, and which smirch with a sort of unconscious indecency her slightest thoughts and actions. Widowed at twenty, she has become the mistress of Larouselle, the richest wine merchant of Bordeaux, who, to the horror of the community, has openly installed her in his country house. In the next villa lives old Doctor Courrèges, who had attended Maria Cross's seven-year-old son in his last illness. Love had never before entered his life, and though, being wise and middle-aged, he does not now give it utterance, it casts a luster upon his placid, scholarly universe. It is not the beautiful devotion of the old doctor, but rather the brilliant youth of his seventeen-year-old son, Raymond, that receives the responses of Maria Cross. But even that distorted passion passes with the merest of gestures; and when Larouselle's wife

at length dies of her cancer, Maria Cross becomes the wife of her protector—"J'ai fait un mariage morganatique," he remarks—and the slave of her saintly stepson. An unclean and disquieting story, of which old Doctor Courrèges is the solitary wholesome element. Yet, with the precision of its style, the incisive veracity of its analyses of character, the actuality of its setting, and the author's extraordinary skill and persuasiveness in storytelling, it is a work of pure literary genius.

It seems to be the portion of François Mauriac to produce fine novels and indifferent ones in precise rotation. *Thérèse Desqueyroux* is almost as flimsy as *Le Fleuve de Feu*. It is merely the commonplace history of a commonplace woman who, mismated with a commonplace burgher of Lande, suffers the commonplace trials of her kind and at length, in order to gain her wished-for freedom, which she would not in any case know how to utilize, resorts to the most commonplace of expedients—she poisons him. Here again we are brought sharply against what we have termed the flaw in Mauriac's creative talent, the fatal obsession and limitation of his point of view. Another woman, in Thérèse's situation, would have left her husband, hanged herself, resigned herself to the consolation of minor adulteries, or comforted herself with the reflection that, imbecile though he was, she had at least found a husband. Not so Thérèse; she must needs commit murder, thereby affirming Mauriac's conviction that the mating of the flesh is a conjuration of the devil. We shall not dispute his point. We merely point out that, for the purposes of fiction, as Mauriac has exemplified it in *Le Fleuve de Feu*, *La Désert de l'Amour* and *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, any so arbitrary attitude as this,

when adopted toward the most fertile subject of realistic fiction, deprives a novel of emotional variety and imaginative resiliency, painfully limits its scope, and ultimately perverts its reality.

Since we have no data to explain the personal genesis of François Mauriac's strange obsession, it is the more difficult to justify its persistence in an artist of his undoubted magnitude and intelligence. But this horror of earthly love lays upon his spirit and his genius as a pervading blight. His Catholicism only partly accounts for it, for Catholic writers have never attempted to set up Nitrean asceticism as an exigent ideal. Mauriac's asceticism possesses a certain medieval flavor, and indeed, in French literature, one must needs go back to the passages on the misfortunes of Abélard in the *Roman de la Rose* to find a similarly passionate description of the manner in which carnal love misdirects and enervates the aspirations of a man. Yet Mauriac is certainly not, like the medieval ascetics, a misogynist. His whole principle is an unconsolable aversion to love—to maternal love in *Génétrix*, to physical love in *La Chair et le Sang* and *Le Fleuve de Feu*, to conjugal love in *Le Désert de l'Amour* and *Thérèse Desquyroux*. In human matings, he sees only the incessant yearning for a union more perfect than can ever be consummated on earth; brutal selfishness, senseless cruelty, defeat, exhaustion, distortion, and the desperation of accumulated trifles. There is something minutely but inescapably unclean about it all. Perfection and integrity he believes to be qualities which every person must nurture within himself, without squandering his moral forces upon another whom he can never really know.

Yet François Mauriac is not lacking in tenderness. He knows and loves these men and women, these suffering convicts of life, whose torments he describes with so much sober understanding. But his is the tenderness of the Holy Inquisition, which tortured and burned the heretical in order to save their souls. He is, in a word, inclined to a sort of physico-religious fanaticism, which at present appears seriously to hamper his development as an artist. The pure flame of an obsession can justify itself by producing a single masterpiece; after that, it is likely to grow tiresome. Mauriac has written *Le Baiser au Lépreux*, *Génétrix* and *La Désert de l'Amour*, which, even if he were to produce nothing more, are sufficient to give him remembrance. But he is not yet fifty, and one *Baiser au Lépreux*, one *Génétrix*, one *Désert de l'Amour*, are all that one writer can produce without debasing the creation. François Mauriac must enlarge his scope. But he cannot enlarge his creative scope until he has widened his spiritual horizons. His future achievement as a novelist intimately depends upon his willingness and his ability to accomplish this miracle.

CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK

CHAIM NACHMAN BIALIK was, of all men, created to sing and prophesy. He was born in 1873, in the village of Radow, Voliner Gubernia, in South Russia. His father was an innkeeper, who cared more for wisdom than accounts. Perhaps he had no chance anyhow at Radow. But his fortunes did not prosper when he removed, with his family, to the city of Zhitomir. The family was poor, yet, while the father lived, they did not suffer. And the little boy who was about to become a poet, possessed all the riches of Nature—at Radow, the woods; at Zhitomir, the River Tetcheriv. Orphaned at the age of seven, young Bialik was sent to live with his grandfather, an old man of fanatical piety, who thought it was sinful to laugh. The little boy's life thenceforth was dismal enough. Sometimes, although not often, he would run away to the river. Usually, since he was of a pious and studious disposition, he was well contented to remain with his books. At twelve, he had mastered the essentials of Chassidism and had read the Kuzrie, the Zohar, the books of the Kabbala, the works of the medieval Jewish philosophers—and the *Guide for the Perplexed* of Moses Maimonides. Before he was thirteen, he was deemed ready to leave the Cheder and to embark upon his independent study of the holy books in the Beth Hamedrash. The loneliness and stifled yearning of his long, solitary, starved, sleepless years in that gloomy house of learning, where "his childhood ripened too soon

and his youth matured before his time," where "his eyes were dimmed and his face grew pallid" as the pleasures of life expired outside the narrow windows, is distilled in his long poem, "The Talmudic Student,"¹ written in 1894, when the poet was twenty-one.

Bialik went to the Yeshivah at Wolozine, at the crucial time when the Chibas Zion movement was awakening the forces of a new Judaism. There he first came under the influence of the great leader of that movement, Achad Ha'am, whose thought was to exercise a powerful influence over his own. Finally choosing the life of action, he left the Yeshivah and devoted himself to the study of languages and the sciences. He went to Odessa, but his secular career was interrupted before it had fairly begun by the death of his grandfather, which called him back to Zhitomir in 1891. With the removal of that stern but generous relative, Bialik's poverty became oppressive. He sold wood until he had saved enough money to take him to Susnovitz, where he was able to support himself by tutoring, and to spare a little time for literary work. His first poems began to appear in the Odessa Hebrew Almanac and in *Hasheloach*, Achad Ha'am's monthly journal. Soon afterwards, through the generosity of his friends and a few rich admirers, a teaching post was found for Bialik in the ancient cultural center of the south. From that time, his ascent was steady. He established his own journal, the *Moriah*, in conjunction with Ravinshy and Ben Zion. Then he became an associate editor of *Hasheloach*, in which post he served with the famous Hebrew scholar, Joseph Klausner. Later, in Warsaw, he established a publishing house, which became ex-

¹ המסדר

tremely successful; for, as poets go, Bialik is as accomplished a business man as Alfred Noyes. In 1904, when at the height of his fame, he made his first pilgrimage to Palestine, where the Jewish settlers received him as their chosen spokesman and prophet. A few years ago, after the Bolshevist Revolution had wrecked his publishing business, he made Palestine his permanent home.

It is at once Bialik's greatness and his limitation as a poet that his work cannot be considered separately from the social situation and aspirations of the Jewish people. His talent arose at the time of his people's greatest need, when the wave of anti-Semitism had reduced Jews to abjectness and the horrible succession of pogroms in Central Europe had left them cowed and hunted. Bialik's first poems were composed in the gloom of the Beth Hamedrash, and are filled with the desolation of sterile wisdom and the pang of an anxious and too eager spirit that has already surmised a surer means of serving God. Those bleak years, which have crushed many a stouter spirit than his—years which the Russian Jews call "Bezvremenyē," because they are the obliteration of time—only made his apprehension of life the more eager and poignant. Thus, in "The Talmudic Student," "Alone,"² "If you Would Know,"³ "A Lone Star"⁴ and similar early poems, his faltering spirit seeks the light; in such verses as "On My Return,"⁵ his growing pessimism spits out its bitterest spleen; in "The Midnight Service,"⁶ he remembers the traditions of his home; and in "In the Cornfield,"⁷ the beauty of the fields he had

² לברי

³ אם יש את נפשך לדעת

⁴ כוכב נדח

⁵ בחשובתי

⁶ תקן חצות

⁷ בשדה

roamed in his boyhood. In "Her Eyes"⁸ composed when he was twenty, he has written as beautiful a love poem as any by Schnaiur; and later, in such verses as "A Daughter of Israel,"⁹ "Where Are You,"¹⁰ "Summer Song"¹¹ and "Tidings,"¹² he returns to the theme of love with an authentic, if limited, lyricism. Bialik's pseudo-folk songs, as a whole, and such poems as "The Apple's Guilt,"¹³ reveal in his work, as early as 1896, the influence of Heine. Bialik has made a translation of Heine's complete works into Hebrew, and has made considerable progress toward a complete version of Shakespeare.

But Bialik's true mission was to stir his people out of the lethargy of their despair and ignominy. The voice of the prophet gradually rises, through "On Pisgah Height,"¹⁴ "Surely the People Are Grass,"¹⁵ the address to the delegates to the first Zionist Conference at Basel in 1897,¹⁶ and "The Exile's Tear,"¹⁷ to its first full utterance in "The Dead of the Wilderness."¹⁸ This remarkable poem is based upon the Talmudic legend that the rebellious Jews who left Egypt for Canaan did not perish in the desert, as the Bible states, but were cast into a deep slumber from which, from time to time, they awaken to struggle onward through eternity toward the goal which they are destined never to reach. Filled with the rebellious grandeur of Lucifer and the stubborn courage of the Maccabees, the example of these insur-

⁸ עיניה⁹ בת ישראל¹⁰ איך¹¹ משירי קיץ¹² בשורה¹³ בשל תפוח¹⁴ על ראש הרצל¹⁵ אכן חציר הצמ¹⁶ מקראי ציון¹⁷ נטף נטפה הדמעה¹⁸ מתי מדבר

gent heroes, to Bialik, indicated by contrast the abyss of enslavement into which the Russian Jews had fallen.

"The Dead of the Wilderness" was written in 1902. In the next year occurred the massacre at Kishinev. Bialik emerged from the shock of that bestiality in his full stature as a prophet. In such flaming poems as "On the Butchery"¹⁹ and "The City of Slaughter,"²⁰ he flays his people for their submission to such infamies, for their cowardice in not fighting back as their homes were pillaged and their daughters ravished, for their abjectness in praying through the carnage for forgiveness of the sins that had brought these misfortunes upon them, when their manhood required that they should die defending their honor. "How could such creatures sin?" he makes God exclaim, in scorn. The events of 1903 brought Bialik to his richest maturity and his greatest celebrity. The utterance of his poems, such as "When I am Dead,"²¹ "And If the Angels Ask,"²² "Logos,"²³ "God's Chastisement is This Curse,"²⁴ "The Curse of the Wilderness,"²⁵ "A Dirge,"²⁶ "At Sunrise,"²⁷ becomes thenceforth more sure and deep. He undertook prose, and his fantasies possess the same purity and beauty as his poems. Then he ceased writing, and in all the years since, there has been no new volume to swell the slight, though remarkably rich, corpus of Bialik's work. The patriotic task of organizing the movement to rehabilitate and repopulate the Holy Land as a homeland for the Jews of

¹⁹ על השחיטה

²⁰ בעיר ההרנה

²¹ אחרי מותי

²² ואם ישאל המלאך

²³ דבר

²⁴ אכן גם זה מוסר אלהים

²⁵ קראו לנחשים

²⁶ ידעתי בליל צרפל

²⁷ עם שמש

the world has claimed a poet who, as it would seem, might easily have become great in a world sense.

It is as yet too early to determine Bialik's place in literature. It is certain, at all events, that he is a poet of the stature of Jehudah Halevi and Ibn Gabirol; and he is still, as creative artists go, in his prime. His choice of the Hebrew language as a medium limits his audience severely, but he uses that language in its full purity and with a verbal virtuosity which constantly recalls the poignant eloquence of the Biblical psalmists. In his poems, Bialik has conclusively proven the supreme flexibility of Biblical Hebrew beneath the hand of an artist. A prophetic poet, nationalistic without bigotry, pious without austerity, and alert to every actual flavor of life, Chaim Nachman Bialik has missed unquestionable greatness only by his impetuosity in relinquishing his art before having achieved fullness, or even roundness, of his presumable utterance. Unless all the signs lie, he had only touched his true richness when he turned to another creative endeavor, to him more exigent and consequential. But there is still time, should he at length return to poetry.

PAUL BOURGET

ALTHOUGH the novels of Paul Bourget have ceased to be significant to the new age in the sense that they were significant to the epoch just passed, they retain a peculiar importance as the last definite, frequently renewed link which binds our generation to the generation of Hippolyte Taine. All of the dogmas accepted as articles of faith by a certain important group of the French writers of to-day were promulgated in the fiction of Paul Bourget; and, since this veteran novelist continues to write as if he were fifty and the year were 1902, they are projected through his work, over again and with the same vitality and emphasis, into the camps of the post-war generation.

By every quality of his nature and talent, Paul Bourget entirely belongs to that unhappy generation whose character and fate Maurice Barrès has so disturbingly described in *Les Déracinés*. Surely no one could be more thoroughly *déraciné*, according to the specification of Barrès's formula, than this man without a province who, at the end of his wanderings, chose to fix his residence and his creative life among a social group which he could never hope to penetrate, and has had the audacity to thrive on the contrast. The son of a professor of mathematics, whose many volumes listed at the Bibliothèque Nationale did not avail to preserve him from the vagaries of transfers, Bourget was born at Amiens (on the 2nd of September 1852), taught his letters at Strasbourg,

launched on his classical studies at Clermont, and graduated at Paris. In the first fifteen years of his life, his family changed its place of residence three times. Even his racial heritage is mixed. Justin Bourget, the son of a civil engineer of Ardèche and the grandson of a peasant, was pure Latin. Paul's mother was from Lorraine, but of German descent. The cultural atmosphere of their home was such as to lend Bourget the inveterate cosmopolitanism of viewpoint which is to us one of the most valuable and attractive characteristics of his work. Yet this diversity of environmental and hereditary influences, which, so far as we can judge, has proved of incalculable advantage in the rounding of his character and the pursuit of his career, he has never ceased to deplore as maleficent and dispersive.

The maleficent factor in Bourget's early life was not, however, the confusion of his original heritage, but the emotional impact of his early reading. As a boy at the lycée he devoured Musset, Balzac, Stendhal, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. "The danger of such books," he has written in the "Lettre Autobiographique" prefixed to Van Daell's edition of *Extraits Choisis* from his works, "lay in the disenchantment that they were likely to produce, and the unbalanced state of mind which must inevitably follow. Although innocent and sincere, we could not but lose our bearings in this untimely initiation into the cruelty and violence of the world. As for me, thanks to an imagination which made the analysis of these masters too life-like for my brain, I fell into an unsettled condition, as unbearable as it was undefinable. It seemed as if my own individuality evaporated into that of the writers I ravenously tried to assimilate." What Bourget did get from the

worldly writers whose works he absorbed at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand was a vicarious experience of life out of proportion with the tenderness of his years and the innocence to which he alludes.

“Et toi qui le premier t'as le Christ en moi,
Toi, grâce auquel je souffre et ne sais pas pourquoi,
Musset . . .”

he writes; and what the passion of Musset had strangely begun, the skepticism of Renan completed. So when, in 1871, Paul Bourget finished his course at the lycée, whose values as a school of immorality he has so well described in *Un Crime d'Amour* and elsewhere, he left it as a perfect type of the disillusioned generation which made its beginnings in the carnage of Sedan and the ruins of the Second Empire, completely equipped with determinism and pessimism and appareled in a gloss of worldly wisdom and the scientific spirit.

The elder Bourget wished his son to become a professor, but, for some obscure reason, Paul Bourget did not enter at the École Normale Supérieure. Instead, he took up Greek philology for a time at the Hautes Etudes, and afterwards studied medicine. The contribution of these discursions to his later work is inestimable, for the attitude of the biological analyst penetrates his whole system of realistic exposition. (Jules Grasset, in *L'Idée Médicale dans les Romans de Monsieur Paul Bourget*, shows to what degree.) When Bourget, on the strength of a handful of articles in the smaller periodicals and one in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, decided to become a writer, his father washed his hands of him, and thenceforth is heard of no more. Full of pride and determina-

tion, the twenty-one-year-old idealist faced the world alone. In order to live, he taught at the cramming schools in the Latin Quarter, at the Fours de Reusse and Lelarge, where Brunetière fumed at his side. Bourget has described this existence in his *Physiologie de l'Amour Moderne*. Mornings from three until seven-thirty, and an hour or two each evening, were all that he had for himself; but the dogged tenacity of purpose which was a part of his heritage from his mother kept him to his task.

Bourget wished to be a poet in those early days. He sought the society of poets, some famous, some about to be famous, like Coppée and Richepin, Boucher, Grandmougin, Cazalis and Plessis, and devoted himself eagerly to the problems of form and method. The volumes of verse which he published in 1875 and 1882, *Au Bord de la Mer*, *La Vie Inquiète* and *Les Aveux*, and especially the intermediate novel in verse, *Edel*, prove Bourget to have been a romantic poet of considerable promise. It was probably the failure of *Edel*, in 1878, which determined Bourget to abandon poetry. *Edel* was the darling of his heart, containing as it did the full richness of his young talent and idealism. Yet it failed, as a work of its nature, produced belatedly, was predestined to fail. The young poet felt the blow keenly, though he could not but have known that, despite the fine qualities of the poem, which won him distinguished praise, and despite its sentimental interest as the last fine flower of Romanticism, a work produced out of the current of his time and tending backwards instead of ahead, deserves only failure. The experience, at all events, proved to him that poetry was not a favorable field for his endeavors.

Meanwhile, Bourget had been writing much for period-

icals, and had already begun, in Madame Adam's *La Nouvelle Revue*, the considerations of Baudelaire, Renan, Flaubert, Taine, and Stendhal which he was to publish, a few months after *Les Aveux*, under the title so finely characteristic of the new creative phase which they inaugurated, *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*. The *Nouveaux Essais*, treating of Dumas fils, Leconte de Lisle, the Goncourts, Turgenev, and Amiel, appeared two years later. The general purpose and direction of these essays cannot be better described than in two passages from Bourget's own pen, the one from the "Lettre Autobiographique" which we have already quoted, the other from a late preface (quoted by Cunliffe and Bacourt):

"My exclusive attention to books was so injurious to me that in 1880, that is to say, almost on the eve of my thirtieth year, I was still uncertain which formula I ought to adopt in my poems or novels. *Edel* awoke me by its very failure. Seeing, in fact, that I was getting on in years and that my literary future was far from clear, I fell into a terrible fit of despair. However, I endeavored to find out the cause of my disappointment, and I thought I found it in the bookish intoxication which had prevented my living my own life, indulging my own tastes, and seeing with my own eyes. Pondering upon this, I thought that my condition was common to many besides me. Thousands of my contemporaries had, like myself, gone to books for their sentimental education, and must have found, like myself, that this attitude was the cause of a great deal of mischief. But they must also have found that the deformation I noticed in my soul was not the only thing. It was remarkable that the books which had influenced me so deeply were, every one of them, the works of contemporary writers. If these writers had such a powerful sway, it must have been because their books corresponded to intellectual or sentimental cravings in me, which were there unknown to myself. They had been men of the present age, with all the passions, joys,

and sorrows of the age. Behind their works, the spirit of the times was alive. So I fancied that I could disengage life from that heap of literature, and I attempted to paint the portrait of my generation through the books which had affected me the most. The *Essais* and *Nouveaux Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine* were composed in the light of this idea."

"These two volumes were better accepted by the public than I had hoped. My friends, among others Taine, whose opinion I prized so highly, advised me to continue them. They did not understand that the purely personal point of view I had adopted in writing these sketches, gave them all their value, and that I could not use the same method in dealing with authors less intimately connected with my intellectual development. My common sense inclined me to listen to their advice, for I had seen, for the first time, my long years of labor recompensed by some success. On the other hand, an instinct I could not overcome urged me toward other fields. What had interested me in these series of essays was not the writers themselves, but the states of soul manifested by these writers. Now these states of the soul, what were they but the states of some particular souls? Just as I had perceived, beyond the books, living sentiments, underneath these sentiments I perceived living souls, and the novel appeared to me as the form of art most suitable to depict them. What sort of novel? At the time I am speaking of . . . the school of novelists descended from Balzac, through Flaubert, had, in France, discarded almost entirely, from that special genre, the study of inner phenomena. And it was precisely the description of such phenomena that attracted me. There was perhaps some boldness in attempting to reestablish the tradition of the analytical novel in the midst of the complete triumph of the novel of manners, and at a period in which the masters of this school were showing matchless superiority of talent. It was in May 1883, in a small room at Oxford, a few steps from the old Worcester College haunted by Thomas de Quincey's ghost, that I began my first novel, *L'Irréparable*, with the very pen with which I had just terminated the preface of the *Essais*."

Thus was Paul Bourget launched upon his long and fruitful career as a novelist. His emotional sensibility had entirely altered. As Ernest Dimnet writes, "Until his twenty-sixth year, Bourget had spoken to us of nothing but himself: after that date, he never spoke of himself at all." In the period in which, in his essays on the writers whose influence he had felt the most deeply, Bourget was endeavoring to grasp the roots of his own spirit and epoch, the basis of his new art was completely formed. Having become aware of himself and of what he purposed to accomplish, he was already in possession of the method. His technique, from the first, was perfectly developed, and from the first, the moralistic direction of his fiction is clearly apparent. His earliest novels, *L'Irréparable*, *Cruelle Enigme*, *Un Crime d'Amour*, *André Cornelis* and *Mensonges*, secured him immediate popular success. Especially by the young was he esteemed, for—apart from the sensational element in his early work, which gained him in some quarters a success of scandal based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the novelist's purposes—the novel of Bourget represented, in a sense, a courageous development beyond the then triumphant Naturalistic method, and a reuniting of the modern novel of scientific observation with the delicate and humane traditions of the eighteenth century.

In his preface to *Les Frères Zemganno*, Jules de Goncourt had already predicted that the limitation imposed upon the imitators of Zola by their preoccupation with the life of the slums would presently return realism to the richer contemplation of the higher social orders. This Bourget, with the unerring perspicacity which has characterized his whole artistic career, immediately perceived

and applied upon his own account. A bourgeois, separated by but one generation from the peasant stock whence he had sprung, he devoted himself almost exclusively to describing the life of the Faubourg Saint Germain, taking up his residence, first in the Rue Monsieur and afterwards in the Rue Barbet de Jouy, in the very heart of that fashionable quarter. This preference has given rise to many ill-natured comments, which, more frequently than not, have merely lent a false edge to otherwise incompetent criticism. One critic (Jules Sageret, in *Les Grands Convertis*) has even put himself to the labor of calculating that, of 391 characters in Bourget's leading novels and short stories, 111 bear either title or particule, 76 belong to the high bourgeoisie, while three artisans and two peasants alone represent the lower orders. Cunliffe quotes Bourget's reply to one such criticism, in which he joins with Octave Feuillet in a perfectly reasonable defense: "I have placed several of these studies among the idlers of high society, because I desired to have the most complete 'cases' possible, and it is in that class alone that people have sufficient leisure to think over their sentiments; for that reason I have been accused of frivolity, snobbishness, or even contempt for the poor."

A more serious and more justifiable charge lay in Bourget's constant concern, in his early novels and short stories, with the psychology of illicit love, and in his occasional prostitution of his talents to the composition of such confections as the sketches of the *Physiologie de l'Amour Moderne*, which he wrote originally for *La Vie Parisienne*. But within four years after the publication of his first novel, the social orientation of Bourget's fiction

was completed. When *Le Disciple* appeared, in 1889, Bourget, the suspected dilettante, emerged boldly as a moralist. "Every writer worthy to hold a pen has, as his first requirement, to be a moralist," he has said. "The moralist is the man who describes life as it is, with its profound lessons of sin and expiation. To show how vice rankles, is to be a moralist." It was thus, then, that Bourget came so vehemently and so earnestly to the novel of ideas, at a time when the principle of "l'art pour l'art" was more strongly entrenched than ever before. Taine, who knew him well and understood him even better than he understood himself, had never ceased to regard him as a philosopher; and now the influence of Taine, of Bonald, Le Play, and Joseph de Maistre, of Spinoza and Pascal, had at length precipitated in the social attitude which Bourget was to represent, with impeccable consistency, up to our day and beyond it.

In the long series of his thesis novels, short stories, and plays, Paul Bourget appears as an expert anatomist of man, as a dispassionate, but withal humane, diagnostician of the maladies of society, a philosopher engrossed in the contemplation of life. "Bourget," writes Jules Lemaitre, "is in the realm of fiction what Frédéric Amiel is in the realm of thinkers and philosophers—a subtle, ingenious, highly gifted student of his time. With a wonderful dexterity of pen, a very acute, almost feminine intuition, and a rare diffusion of grace about all his writings . . . he neither feels, like Loti, nor sees, like Maupassant—he reflects." Bourget's scientific training has stood him in excellent stead; if he had never entered the operating room of the Hôtel Dieu, or if he had not been the son of a mathematician, he would be a less interesting novel-

ist, for he represents in literature the laboratory expert whose pity and understanding do not dim the eye that he keeps fixed on the objective of his microscope. *Le Disciple*, with its discussion of the philosopher's moral responsibility in the guilt which an extreme application of his principles may bring upon his followers; *L'Étape*, with its much too extreme picture of the desolation which results when a family attempts to rise too rapidly above the barriers of its normal class; *Un Divorce*, with its harsh insistence upon the Catholic view of marriage; *L'Émigré*, with its glorification of the principle of heredity; *Le Démon de Midi*, with its stern lesson against the solitary late lapse which mars an otherwise blameless life; *Le Sens de la Mort*, with its defense of the beauties of renunciation; *Nos Actes Nous Suivent*, with its mystical chain of coincidences pointing a lesson of personal responsibility—the examples are too numerous to multiply—are moral parables, larded with a very fine narrative art, but advanced with great seriousness to rectify the social balance at the points of its deficiency. Bourget's most distinguished accomplishment is his scientific development of the principle of moral responsibility to its ultimate compulsion.

How much Bourget the novelist yielded to Bourget the social philosopher, it would be difficult to judge. Henry James, who shared many qualities and attitudes with his French friend, bravely notes his major deficiencies as a creative artist in a letter, dated the 19th of August 1898, acknowledging a copy of *La Duchesse Bleue*. James writes:

"I have received the *Duchesse Bleue*, and also the *Land of Cockaigne* from Madame Paul, whom I thank very kindly

for her inscription. I had just read the *Duchess*, but haven't yet had leisure to attack the great Matilda. The *Duchess* inspires me with lively admiration—so close and firm, and with an interest so nourished straight from the core of the subject, have you succeeded in keeping her. I never read you sans vouloir me colleter with you on what I can't help feeling to be the detrimental parti-pris (unless it be wholly involuntary) of some of your narrative, and other technical, processes. These questions of art and form, as well as of much else, interest me deeply—really much more than any other; and so, not less, do they interest you: yet, though they frequently come up between us, as it were, when I read you, I nowadays never seem to see you long enough at once to thresh them comfortably out with you. Moreover, after all, what does threshing-out avail?—that conviction is doubtless at the bottom of my disposition, half the time, to let discussion go. Each of us, from the moment we are worth our salt, writes as he can and only as he can, and his writing at all is conditioned upon the very things that from the standpoint of another method most lend themselves to criticism. And we each know much better than anyone else can what the defect of our inevitable form may appear. So, though it does strike me that your excess of anticipatory analysis undermines too often the reader's curiosity—which is a gross, loose way of expressing one of the things I mean—so, probably, I really understand better than yourself why, to do the thing at all, you must use your own, and nobody's else, trick of presentation. No two men in the world have the same idea, image, and measure of presentation. All the same, I must some day read one of your books with you, so interesting would it be to me—if not to you!—to put, from page to page and chapter to chapter, your finger on certain places, showing you just where and why (selon moi!) you are too prophetic, too exposedly constructive, too disposed yourself to swim in the thick reflective element in which you set your figures afloat. All this is a clumsy notation of what I mean, and, on the whole, mal à propos into the bargain, inasmuch as I find in the *Duchess* plenty of the art I most like and the realization of an admira-

ble subject. Beautifully done the whole episode of the actress's intervention in the Rue Nouvelle, in which I noted no end of superior touches. I doubt if any of your readers lose less than I do—to the fiftieth part of an intention. All this part of the book seems to me thoroughly handled—except that, I think, I should have given Molan a different behavior after he gets into the cab with the girl—not have made him act so immediately 'in character.' He takes there no line—I mean no deeper one—which is what I think he would have done. In fact I think I see, myself, positively what he would have done; and in general he is, to my imagination, as you give him, too much in character, too little mysterious. So is Madame de Bonnivet—so too, even, is the actress. Your love of intellectual daylight, absolutely your pursuit of complexities, is an injury to the patches of ambiguity and the abysses of shadow which really are the clothing—or much of it—of the effects that constitute the material of our trade. Basta!

The question is answered, first, in the fact that, being constituted as he was, Bourget could not have failed to write of social problems in a didactic way; and secondly, in the circumstance that none of the non-didactic fiction which he has continued to produce throughout his career is significant as art, his reputation and importance being entirely based on his thesis novels.

Bourget's social ideas, preceding in point of date those of Barrès and Maurras, and maintaining their position as pure intellectual conceptions without reference to politics, lend the now aged novelist a dignity apart from the intrinsic merit of his works. Despite his apparent success, he has, in reality, been a complete failure as a creative artist. But in the moralistic and nationalistic ideology which, by the continuity and consistency of his efforts, Bourget has projected into the present, he represents the link which binds the generation of Taine with

the groups of post-war artists and theorists whom the recent crisis has led to a series of principles similar to that with which the humiliation of 1870 had fired the generation with which Bourget came of age. Upon this semi-nationalistic, semi-social principle, his whole development as novelist and theorist is explained. "I write," he says, "in the light of two eternal truths—religion and monarchy." He exposes the vices of the social order, so as to teach the lessons of virtue, by depicting the misery which excesses bring. He supports the monarchy and the old aristocracy upon the hereditary principles and in virtue of the stability of the Ancien Régime, as opposed to the anarchy of democracy; he says, with Louis VeUILLET, "If I had to reorganize my country, I would create an aristocracy and omit my own name from the list." He opposes the shifting of the classes, because such shiftings produce inflation and disturb the social order. He professes Catholicism, and betrays the underlying motive of his conversion when, in *Pages de Critique et de Doctrine*, he praises Fustel de Coulanges for writing in his will: "I wish to be buried according to the customs of the French; that is to say, religiously. It is true that I neither practice nor believe in the Catholic religion, but I must remember that I was bred in it. Patriotism requires that, if we do not think as our ancestors, we may at least respect what they held to be the truth." He opposes divorce upon the same principle that he deplures illicit love—because it destroys the home and undermines the social fabric. He denies the prerogatives of the individual in behalf of the family, and those of the family in behalf of the national spirit, which binds the present alike to

the remembrance of the past and the imperatives of the future. We respect Bourget's courage, his rigor, and his earnestness in the enunciation of his doctrines; we admire Paul Bourget; but we should hardly, like Stevenson, wish to live with him.

CHARLES MAURRAS

IT is, in a sense, the irony of his greatness that Charles Maurras, who will be remembered in political history as the subtlest political theorist of our generation, is destined to remain a prophet unhonored and unread save in his own country. Although acknowledged, by his opponents and adherents alike, as a distinguished and significant thinker and one of the greatest French masters of prose, Maurras is little known in the English-speaking countries. The explanation of this omission is simple and perfectly reasonable. Except in its purely belles-lettristic qualities, his work offers little to compensate the average foreign reader, who chances not to be interested in French political philosophy, for his diligence in seeking it. But to those who love ideas for their own sake and take an intellectual delight in the sharp play of logic perfectly expressed, the political essays which represent the greatest refinement of Charles Maurras's extraordinary intellect remain a richness still to be savored.

All that is likely to interest Americans in the political philosophy of Charles Maurras may be stated briefly—though, in mere justice, it should be said that a system of thought so conditioned as his by the events of diplomatic history and the peculiarities of the French national disposition cannot be submitted to generalization without danger of misrendering. Primarily an opponent of Romanticism and sentimental democracy, Maurras has organized his political ideals into the program of aristocratic

Republicanism promulgated in his organ, *L'Action Française*. The most intrepid and the cruelest enemy which Rousseauism has ever had, his dogmatic rejection of this influence, which for a century and a half has permeated European thought and fired nations to revolution, would be sufficient to distinguish Charles Maurras in an ideological sense. But he has gone much further than any however healthy iconoclasm. He has proposed, in place of the system which he has rhetorically demolished, an ideal political scheme which he believes to be more acceptable to logic and to the needs of the present time, which, if it cannot be realized in action, is at least interesting as a laboratory hypothesis. He proposes nothing less than the renunciation of liberties for the sake of attaining liberty. He would set aside, with one horizontal movement of his extended fingers, the French Revolution, with all its results, and reestablish the Bourbons on the French throne. Parliaments are an illusion, created by peoples committed to democracy for the gratification of their egotism. No body of professional statesmen, liable to corruption, can be trusted to safeguard the liberties of a nation or to administer its affairs. But a monarchy presents none of these disadvantages. "A monarchy," he writes, "is always checked by regicide, but where is the check on a democratic republic?"

Maurras's ideas on the monarchy are expressed principally in four books: *L'Enquête sur la Monarchie*, *Une Campagne Royaliste au Figaro*, *Libéralisme et Liberté* and *Idées Royalistes*. His conception of the necessity of abolishing democracy is based almost exclusively upon his reasoned conviction of the superior practical utility of the monarchy as a political institution, and whatever ad-

herence he may have proclaimed to the Bourbon cause is purely incidental to this, and quite impersonal in its emphasis. It matters little whom destiny may elect to this great office, for there remain always "deposition, exile, or the scaffold" as resorts, in the event of error. Moreover, although he is himself an unbeliever, Maurras would restore the Catholic religion to its ancient dignity in his ideal state, and in this his motive is again purely one of political utility. His three essays on this subject, *Le Dilemme de Marc Sangnier*, *La Politique Religieuse* and *L'Action Française et la Religion Catholique*, have caused Maurras's biographer, Albert Thibaudet, to bestow upon him the amusing epithet of "an honorary Catholic." It is not difficult to see why, despite his vigorous support of the Catholic State, the works of Maurras and his organ, *L'Action Française*, have lately been placed on the Index.

It would appear that Maurras, as a Royalist and Neo-Catholic, is a conservative and a traditionalist. In reality, he is neither. His political philosophy is full of subtle differences in disaccord with the tenets of conservatism, which, for example, have prevented him from enjoying the esteem of the Royalist party, who contemplate him with a suspicion not unmixed with chagrin. Even the circumstance that Léon Daudet has been his chief lieutenant for the last fifteen years has not appreciably increased the popularity of *L'Action Française* among the French Royalists and clergy. The fact is, that the speculations of Charles Maurras are too precious to stand harmoniously within the dogmas of any party; indeed, he implies so much of aspiration for the future and comprehension of the past in the weight of a single phrase, that

it is almost impossible to adduce from his work any single principle without at the same time admitting half a dozen variations. Maurras has had his political philosophy, in part, from a number of sources. As a classical scholar, he has observed the Greek city-state and the Peloponnesian League. He has had much from Comte and from Fustel de Coulanges (for whose present fame he is chiefly responsible), as well as from Taine, Joseph de Maistre, Le Play, and Bonald; and something even from Proudhon and Renan, whom he detests. Maurice Barrès, to whom Maurras was indebted for his first practical opportunity to bring his work before the public (his bi-daily department, "La Vie Intellectuelle," in *La Cocarde*), merely refined, rather than influenced, his thought. These various currents and a dozen more, Maurras has united in the body of a political philosophy which, with all its contradictions and impracticalities, is purgative as an ideal, and, beneath the touch of his perfect artistry, sometimes becomes exquisite and almost desirable.

Maurras is one of those exceptional reformers who are moved by purely intellectual passions. He abominates disorder in any of the departments of life, and reveres tradition. In each of his theories, he is inspired by a sincere impulse for the public good, regardless of his own advantage and, in so far as he is able to objectify his thought, of personal predilections; and his meditations are conditioned at every point by a critical comprehension of the examples of history. "The world," he writes, "would be less good, if it involved a smaller number of mysterious victims sacrificed to its perfection." His perfect intellectuality leads him to attitudes which the ordinary

passionate man cannot help feeling are limiting and undesirable. He completely lacks the large spirit of toleration that distinguishes his fellow southerners, Montaigne and Montesquieu. His intense nationalism, to which he subordinated all the principles of the *Ligue d'Action Française* during the war, inspired him with an unnecessarily vehement hatred of everything German, which years and the victory have by no means mitigated. This arbitrary prejudice disfigures his otherwise clear reasoning in *Les Conditions de la Victoire* and *L'Allée des Philosophes*; and it exposes a malignant influence wherever his argument touches Germany in *Quand les Français ne s'aimaient pas*, in *Le Pape, la Guerre et la Paix*, in *Les Trois Aspects du Président Wilson*, or in his other writings on the war. It rises almost to a frenzied utterance in his ode, "La Bataille de la Marne." Maurras's general attitude resembles that ascribed by Plutarch to the elder Cato, who would end all his speeches in the Roman Senate with the disturbing refrain: "Delenda est Carthago." One would expect a more constructive platform from so fine a thinker. This attitude, which so many Frenchmen share, is not quite civilized. But there is more than a little of pure fanaticism in the political philosophy of Charles Maurras. For a worshiper of logic, his mind, to an astonishing degree, is closed to any persuasion of experience, sociology, political economy, or psychology, which might lead to a decision contrary to his preconceptions. It is this fanatical element of his political attitude which makes it possible for him to lend the dignity of his movement to a gang of rowdies like "Les Camelots du Roi."

The ideology of Charles Maurras remains, however, in-

teresting in itself; for as a pure theorist, there is probably no living writer as audacious and as admirable as he. His much discussed proposal of decentralization as a means of obtaining popular liberty, as opposed to the fictitious liberty promised by democracies, is the closest that he has come to practical idealism, and the books in which this is discussed—*L'Idée de la Décentralisation* and *Un Débat Nouveau sur la République et la Décentralisation*—with *L'Enquête sur la Monarchie*, *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence* (his finest ideological generalization) and that admirable essay on the French foreign policy under Hanotaux and Delcassé, *Kiel et Tanger*, offer the most among his political works to foreign readers. The very spirit of his discourse, apart from its intellectual subtlety, is sufficient to raise one's heart, for Maurras writes of the public good as Swedenborg writes of the Divine Providence.

There remain the literary criticism, the moral tales, and the verse of Charles Maurras; and to view these departments of his work, we must digress slightly to observe something of his background. Maurras was born in 1868 at Martigues, in southern Provence, and his whole heritage is southern and upper bourgeois. Daniel Halévy has said: "Maurras is a Mediterranean man, a tragic, whose mind conceives distinct forms terminated by death." After having completed his studies at the Catholic College of Aix-en-Provence, he went to Paris, where, at the age of twenty-three, he embarked upon his literary career. Because of a deficiency in his hearing, he was forced very largely back upon himself, and the greater portion of his prodigious researches he conducted without direction, in the seclusion of his infirmity. Already

familiar with the Latin and Greek classics, he learned English and Italian, and read voluminously in French literature and history, meanwhile writing as inspiration and opportunity permitted. It is said that an article of his, published in *L'Observateur Française*, led to his friendship with Barrès, who, when he became editor of *La Cocarde*, designated Maurras for a literary column, in which the latter wrote on an average of three articles a week for a period of six months. Shortly afterwards, Maurras joined the staff of *La Revue Encyclopédique Larousse* in a similar capacity, and later transferred to *La Gazette de France*, where his best work appeared.

From such auspicious beginnings, it was only a short way to comparative celebrity. Moreover, every element of Maurras's literary manner was calculated to leave a memorable impression upon the readers of his occasional articles. His style was perfectly matured, and possessed all the rare beauty and the exquisite marriage with its subject which distinguishes it to-day. His knowledge was astonishingly deep and varied, and he had already arrived at the sociological conception of criticism by which he considered each author, not only according to a lofty ideal of literary excellence and spiritual elevation, but in his relation to the French literary and political tradition and with regard to the possible effects of his works, were they to become influential, upon the prosperity of the nation at large. This was a new and provocative point of view in criticism and, abetted by a taste almost perfect within its own limits (though extremely eccentric outside of them), it led Maurras to many startling conclusions with regard to the great French masters. Comparatively few of these essays have been collected, though

those which we have, suffice to establish Maurras in a very high rank as a critic. *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence* contains, besides the extremely fine article on Auguste Comte, the articles on René Vivien, Madame de Régnier (Gérard d'Houville), Madame Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, and the Comtesse de Noailles, grouped under the heading "Le Romantisme Féminin," in which he deplures Romanticism's inveterate "goût de la chair." In 1891, Maurras published his study of his friend, Jean Moréas, the Greco-French poet with whom he was associated the year before in founding the Ecole Romane and bringing about a pseudo-classical revival in French poetry to counteract the influence of Symbolism and Decadence. In 1898, his extraordinary studies of Chateaubriand, Michelet, and Sainte-Beuve appeared, under the title of *Trois Idées Politiques*; and his witty demolition of George Sand and Alfred de Musset, and through them of the whole literature of Romanticism, *Les Amants de Venise*, followed in 1902. He has also published an admirable, if exceedingly one-sided study of Dante, *Le Conseil de Dante*; *Pages Littéraires Choisies*, a selection of his literary essays, with many revisions; a definitive edition of *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence* and *Trois Idées Politiques*, combined under the title of *Romantisme et Révolution*; *Anatole France, Politique et Poète*, and his collected poems, *La Musique Intérieure*.

Maurras's critical method takes something of its gesture from both Sainte-Beuve and Nisard; but in its sociological, which is its important, aspect, it is fundamentally a personal development. In his criticism of literature, as in his criticism of politics, Maurras is wholly objective, and his emotions function only intel-

lectually. The same virtues of high-minded devotion to a stringent ideal of perfection and truth, and the same ascetic rejection of everything that is not justified by this ideal elevation, mingle, in his literary criticism as in his political writings, with the same faults of unbending dogmatism and perverse blindness to every element which may not contribute to the proof of his thesis. His literary criticism indeed differs only in subject from his political criticisms, and both tend with such unanimity to the common end of the salvation of France that the distinction, as in *L'Avenir de l'Intelligence*, which is certainly as much a political tract as it is a criticism of literature, sometimes becomes very fine indeed.

The same may be said, with even greater emphasis, of Maurras's moral tales and personal digressions, among which we may name *Le Chemin de Paradis* and *Athinéa*, and the belated companion-piece to the latter, *Athènes Antique*, as well as the candidly polemical *L'Etang de Berre*. In the collection of nine stories entitled *Le Chemin de Paradis*, the author, according to his own statement, has "dared to evoke, in the presence of a thousand errors, the finished types of Reason, of Beauty, and of Death, the triple and unique end of the world." *Athinéa* is the record of the author's first journeys to Greece, Italy, and Corsica. In 1896, at the instigation of Gustave Janicot, the editor of *La Gazette de France*, Maurras visited Greece, to report the Olympic Games. A natural Grecophile, born in territory anciently colonized by the Greeks, he discovered something of his own hidden spirit in the ruins of the Acropolis. Amid these sublime relics of the golden age of truth, beauty, and logic, he verified his intuitions, set his mingled ideas into a con-

crete formula, and strengthened his spirit for the ambitious task to which he had appointed himself. There he had his vision of the perfect aristocracy of the spirit. So profound was the impression of this first visit to his spiritual motherland, that the germs of all the ideas which he has since expressed are to be found in the record of his meditations on the Acropolis.

As a poet, Maurras has been more successful in his influence on his contemporaries than in his own courtship of the Muse. It must be admitted that the long introduction to his collected poems, *La Musique Intérieure*, has more excellence in two of its pages than there is to be found in twenty of the poems which follow. We have said that Maurras is a thoroughly accomplished stylist, and it follows that as much as words can contribute to a poem, he has accomplished. But alas! in this splendid raiment there is no body. The fact is sad and unchivalrous, but it cannot be avoided. The long preface to *La Musique Intérieure* is an uncommonly interesting document partly for its charming description of the author's childhood and his first dawning awareness of beauty, but chiefly for its extraordinary judgments on modern poetry. It should be remarked that poetry is the unique weakness in Maurras's critical system, and that, with the exception of Ronsard and the comrades of the Pléiade, he has never written about a poet without misunderstanding him completely. We are not, however, prepared to have him state that the Provençal writers are the natural inheritors of the literary glories of Greece and Rome, that the English and German poets are on the whole ignoramuses, and that the greatest poet produced in Europe in the nineteenth century is the author of *Le Pèlerin Passionné* and

Esquisses et Souvenirs, the Greco-French Jean Papadiamantopoulos, known to fame as Jean Moréas, who left the feet of Paul Verlaine to sit at the feet of his ingenious celebrant. But this is no more than typical of Maurras's arbitrary pronouncements. We may think what we will of his taste, but it cannot be said that he lacks the courage of his convictions.

KAREL CAPEK

THE extraordinarily rapid rise of Karel Capek from comparative obscurity to world-wide acclaim, the exceptional vitality and fecundity of his talent, and the exigent social and moralistic preoccupations which control his work, are all, in a fundamental and impressive sense, suggestive of the psychological situation of the newly triumphant Czechoslovak Republic. Liberation and national solidarity have released the imagination and the idealism of this long oppressed nation in a way which cannot be without far-reaching intellectual consequences. The single fact that Czechoslovakia has united its peoples, organized a stable government, and asserted and decisively maintained its independence, is a historical incident by no means unique. What really counts is that, perhaps inspired by the eminently sane political idealism of President Masaryk, perhaps intoxicated by the restoration of their liberty and language, their integrity and ancient greatness, the Czechish peoples have set themselves, with an altogether exceptional energy and intelligence, to the labor of reclaiming, by patient industry, artistic virtuosity, and pure accomplishment and merit, the position of eminence which they enjoyed when Prague was a Mecca for the learned, and Bohemian knights fared the world in search of virtuous causes.

The whole nature of Capek's genius is Czech. The leader of the young generation which, since the war, has superseded that of Vrchlický, Březina, Machar, and

Sova, he perfectly exemplifies the type of his special group. In his novels and plays, the classic European forms, introduced into Bohemian literature chiefly through the translations of Vrchlický, are cunningly adapted to the impulsive, informal utterance of the new age, and salted with occasional, tactfully blended admixtures of German Expressionism, Russian Rayonnism, and the Cubism which Josef Capek has borrowed from the French. Technically, Capek's work is anomalous, for it is as distinctly in the classical tradition as it is in the modernist. The singular effectiveness of his novels arises from this duality, as well as from the author's trick of lending his narrative a structure and climactic arrangement similar to that which he employs in his plays.

But Karel Capek's really important point of departure is not one of technique, but one of character. The first notable poet of Czech nationalism, the nature of Capek's inspiration is conspicuously Slavic. If one does not feel, this racial insistence in the work of his older contemporaries, except Březina, it is because, in refusing to be Austrian, they became international. But freed now of the Habsburg yoke and of the dead weight of its compulsion, the Czechs, by a touching miracle explainable only in that indomitable patriotism by which their native language was kept alive through so many proscribed years, reverted at once, as by a natural impulse, to their first racial origins. Thus, in Capek's audacity of invention, in his Olympian disdain of the strait prescriptions of form, and above all, in his intense social consciousness, his sense of responsibility, his fundamental uprightness, his apprehension of God in the spirit of life, and his

tenderness for every living creature, we perceive the original Slav.

The problems of humanity are never absent from Capek's work. If his novels and plays are in themselves thrilling, adroit, and occasionally beautiful, they are so merely because Capek is one of the most accomplished living publicists. The Czechs, of necessity, became masters of subtle evangelism under the Habsburg censorship. The only instrument of expression which was left to them was the theater, so they made the theater a national forum, with a completeness hardly equaled since the time of the Greeks; by recalling the heroic deeds of their past, by impassioned lyricism or purposeful innuendos, by scrupulous symbolism, even in their marionette shows, they constantly reminded one another that the ancient spirit of their nation still lived. Capek employs the technique which was then developed as an approach to what he conceives to be the fundamental problems of life. The collections of novelettes, *The Crucifixion* and *Tales of Distress*, with which he opened his literary career, exhibit his talent in an unripe and imitative state. But already, in the arbitrary juxtapositions of his characters, he appears as an experimental chemist mixing inimical reagents; and in his delicate psychological analyses after the event, he is already seeking the ultimate touchstone by which the mystery of human nature may be resolved to its elements.

In his more mature work, Capek's curiosity is toward life itself. In his first play, *The Robber* (begun in 1911 and produced in 1920), the central character is symbolical of the energetic and willful spirit of youth. *R. U. R.* is a symbolical melodrama of the mechaniza-

tion of the proletariat. *The Insect Comedy* (written in collaboration with his brother Josef, the author of *The Land of Many Names*) is an ironical fantasy of human egoism and weakness. *The Makropoulos Secret* is a satirical demonstration of the worthlessness of human life. Each of these plays is theatrically perfect, tense in action to the point of melodrama, ingenious in execution, and conspicuously original in conception—plays in every way worthy of the accomplished hand of the late producing director of the Vinohradské Theater. Each has been produced with notable success in half a dozen capitals, and by the pure virtue of theatrical dexterity and effectiveness, has deserved this success. But as symbolical drama, it must be confessed that none of these plays will bear scrutiny. Their failure in this respect is too obvious to need a bill of particulars: in *R. U. R.*, for example, one notes the needless sexual differentiation of the Robots, Helena's unreasonable decision to remain on the island, the feebleness of her humanitarianism, Doctor Gall's broadly symbolical abandonment of the security of applied science for the perils of pure science, and the exceedingly inorganic epilogue, with its unconvincing interlude between the Robot Primus and the Robotess Helena. One admits the principles of the plays intellectually, but one never feels them. One sees through the whole fabric, as clearly as one follows a proposition in logic. It is Capek's creative instinct that is here at fault, for he has not been able to assimilate these representations of his ideas into his consciousness and to give them an organic semblance of life. These deficiencies do not prevent the plays from reaching an astonishing degree of theatrical effectiveness, but they emphasize Karel Capek's creative

limitations. The intrusion of the thesis impedes and sometimes, despite the author's ingenuity, arbitrarily determines the development of the drama. The instinct of the dramatist, on the contrary, confounds the exposition of his symbolism. The result is that, fine as Capek's plays undoubtedly are, they have in no case fully accomplished the possibilities of their original design.

Capek has lately found a more gracious vehicle for his symbolical evangelism in the novel; and it is in the novel (paradoxically, since the nature of his talent is essentially dramatic) that he has, for the first time, succeeded in expounding his theses comprehensively and without violence to the artistic development of his incidental plots. The faults which we have remarked in the plays are still present in the novels, but they are fewer and less conspicuous; and the less rigid outlines of the narrative form, which in Capek's hands becomes fluid to the point of idiosyncrasy, easily absorbs such as remain. Capek, the novelist, has been profoundly influenced by the work and thought of H. G. Wells. *Krakatit*, that cyclonically dynamic romance of the Engineer Prokop, who has discovered an incredibly destructive explosive, which he guards for the service of mankind, immediately recalls *The World Set Free*. When Van Wyck Brooks writes of Wells: "He is an intellectual, rather than an artist; that is to say, he naturally describes and interprets life in the light of ideas, rather than in the light of experience," he exactly describes Karel Capek. For the whole of Capek's art is an abstraction. He is too clever a dramatist—a publicist, if you will—to ignore life, so in *Krakatit* he gives us the delectable picture of Annie's Frühlingserwachen, and shows us Prokop ready to deliver his dis-

covery into the hands of the philistines and the haughty Princess ready to betray her rank and friends, for love of one another. But one sees a new symbol even in these rare human episodes.

In *The Absolute*, Capek has achieved a still greater abstraction—a Wellsian novel which the best of Wells's does not surpass, developed to the perfection of its genre, and charged with the most brilliant, acrid, and withal despairing irony. As in *Krakatit*—and again, *The World Set Free*—the situation in *The Absolute* hinges upon a pseudo-scientific hypothesis: the discovery of a means to utilize the internal energy of the atom as a motive power. Prokop forgets his formula before it can work great damage. Marek, filled with high hopes for the comfort of man, sells his to a great financier. The cataclysm comes about in a strange and surprising way. Instead of making men less rapacious and liberating them, this closeness to the mysterious center of all energy makes them religious. Therein they approach the Absolute, and the Absolute, as medieval experimental science knew it, is God. So a reign of pugnacious godliness ensues, which eventually reduces the earth to chaos. Overproduction disorganizes the whole economic system. A mysterious virtue prompts the owners of Absolute-motors to give all they possess to the poor, bank clerks to distribute the funds in their care, and statesmen to precipitate diplomatic crises through excess of pure goodness. Rival religious sects, bitterly embattled against one another, arise everywhere, and a great religious war rages throughout the world, until depletion brings the struggle to an end and the old order is restored.

One must watch Karel Capek. He had done much, but

he has still more to do. The signs promise richly for him. Born in 1890, he is still young; he is already famous; he possesses a rich and audacious talent; he is in the intellectual mid-current of a new national spirit which has but lately become conscious of itself, and which is determined to be great. Zlata Praha will surely nourish such a talent as his.

GIUSEPPE ANTONIO BORGESE

THE phenomenon of the critic turned artist is not unexampled in the history of literature; but the examples, generally speaking, are not calculated to make other critics hasten to expose themselves to the honest judgment of their peers. The *Volupté* of Sainte-Beuve is a case in point, as well as the scores of less conspicuous performances upon which biographers of great critics perfunctorily draw the curtains of mercy and which the "Epuisés" of time have graciously put beyond the sarcasms of the curious. Despite the facility with which the creative talent occasionally lends itself to criticism, there is something in the critical practice which renders its performer impotent for creation; the daily routine of analyzing the merits and the defects of other men's works ends in a partial atrophy of the creative instinct, which it would require more years to overcome than most ambitious critics are willing to devote to such a questionable purpose. So, when G. A. Borgese's first novel, *Rubè*, appeared in 1921, we were unprepared for the quiet competence which the book immediately displayed. Borgese had, indeed, published a volume of poems some years before, and they had been most pleasing; and we vaguely remembered a short story or two. We had also noted in his criticism a certain vitality and vivacity of appreciation which strongly indicated the presence of an instinct a little more than merely critical. But we had hardly expected Borgese, when the intellectual epoch which had

lent his criticism significance had passed, to become in a night, as it were, as excellent a creative artist as he had previously been a critic. In failing to perceive his capacity for such a transition, we had momentarily left out of account the exceptional suppleness of his literary talent and the mellowness of his attitudes toward literature and life. We had failed to estimate him, in a word, as a thoroughly competent man of letters, equally capable of expressing himself in any medium which might best suit his subject or his fancy.

Giuseppe Antonio Borgese has taken life calmly, pursuing the career of letters with quiet but persistent diligence; and he has mounted with slow but certain steps. He began as a journalist, and he was probably a good one; at the time of the publication of *Rubè*, he was foreign editor of the famous *Corriere della Sera* of Milan. He had already distinguished himself, as a literary critic, as one of the most intelligent of the less servile disciples of Benedetto Croce; and the best of his early critical essays, as preserved in *La Vita e il Libro*, constitute a body of criticism as important for its own values as for its discrimination of a cultural epoch, and in many points worthy to stand beside that of the master whom its author has since renounced. In *La Vita e il Libro* and *Storia della Critica Romantica*, we have the critical activity of Borgese before the war; in *Risurrezioni* and *Tempo di Edificare*, we have his new perceptions after the impact of that terrific calamity; in *Studi di Letterature Moderne*, with its circumspect, intelligent, and informed considerations of the chief modern writers of Europe, we have proof of the cosmopolitanism of his spirit and of the exceptional richness and variety of his erudition.

The war was the turning point in Borgese's creative life, as it was a spiritual crisis in the lives of so many Italians. It brought a plumbing of hitherto unsurmised depths of human emotion; it brought the realization of tragedy; it brought exaltation and disillusion, and a knowledge of the beastliness of men. It may be said that the war made Borgese a creative artist, for it was amid the turmoil of the conflict that his spirit first spoke in its authentic accent. He had been a critic; he had performed a worthy work, and his generation had progressed beyond him. It remained for him to prove his precepts, to create upon his own account; to take leave of criticism and to forge, out of the rough metal of his emotional experiences, works which should more perfectly express all that he had seen and heard and felt. Thus, we have *Rubè* and *I Vivi e i Morti*, and finally *La Città Sconosciuta*.

Rubè is too well known in its English translation to require a recital of its merits. Even to-day, when we instinctively avoid all reference to the war, it remains a fine novel. In the Stendhalian Filippo Rubè, with his futile genius, his devastating analysis, his tormented introspection, his queer mingling of stubborn egotism and callow irresolution, his cowardice and his embarrassed insincerity, and in the grotesque caprice of the events which defeat and intimidate him throughout his life and hasten him to his futile death, we see the whole predicament of the youth of post-war Italy. *Rubè* is a symbol, the sacrificial goat of an epoch, and in his malady we perceive the symptoms of that very illness which is forcing youth on every side to relinquish the conquest of life. We know it all. When Rubè, the young lawyer, joins in

the hue and cry for war, rushes to the front, and falls sick with fear at the first aerial bombardment, we remember; when he confesses his cowardice to Eugenia, his colonel's daughter, and then, frantic with a fear lest she betray him, seduces her without love, marries her in contempt, and afterwards rewards her devotion with harshness, infidelity, and desertion; when he grows to hate the war, and faces the enemy without firing a shot; when he is decorated for bravery by a mere inadvertence; when, after the war, he is discharged from the position which he had gained at the cost of so much humiliation by reason of his political opinions; when, in the abyss of his extremity, unable to cope with his problems by his own wit, he is saved by the ironical intervention of fate in the form of a winning lottery ticket; when he is accused of the murder of his paramour, who has been drowned in the Lago Maggiore, and exposed to the cruel denuding of public prosecution, which ruins him even though he is acquitted; when he tries, even in the confessional, to convict himself of guilt in a death to which he was only the unhappy witness; when, returning at last to his wife, he misses her at the Bologna station, walks the streets in blind despair, and presently finds himself in an anarchist procession, with the black flag of Fascism in one hand and the red flag of Bolshevism in the other, and is run down in a charge of cavalry by "a mere boy, fair-complexioned, with gentle and quiet features and eyes the color of the sky"; and when he dies, saying to his friend, Federico Monti: "I wished for the greatness of my country, and instead, it seems that everything is disintegrating; I was seeking something for myself, too, in the war, I confess—a reason for existence, for dying, an

ubi consistam, and instead, have lost in it everything that I had"; and when his wife caresses his closed eyes and murmurs: "Sleep, sleep . . ."—we follow the events of this life with a familiar interest, with that pang of association which Henry James termed "the emotion of recognition." "Das ist dein Welt! Das heisst eine Welt!"

Filippo Rubè, the irresolute one, caught in the vortex of modern life, with its deep corruption and dismay—the type of that impetuous generation which has demolished the whole structure of accepted standards to create the Superman, only to find that they are themselves too weak—seeks the solution of his problem in action. In *I Vivi e i Morti*, Eliseo Gaddi, his obverse counterpart, confronted with a similar problem, seeks its solution in renunciation. He does not come any the nearer to finding it. He is a fugitive from life, wrapped in the perilous solitude of his own dread of vital contacts. His mother is the only human being with whom he feels safe and undisturbed, and to her he clings. He loves twice, but without passion and without relinquishing himself; he becomes a father without having known his child. He keeps life away from him, for life seems to him a fearsome monster which snaps at him at each approach; and thus he passes, a dead man among the living who are perhaps no less apathetic than he, to the grave made humid by his mother's tears.

Italian critics, possibly upon purely stylistic considerations, have complained that Borgese's narrative (which, according to our standards, is uncommonly graceful and effective) is untraditional, journalistic, and unproportioned. The fifteen stories in *La Città Sconosciuta* are a sufficient reply to such objections, for they are compact

and deeply realized, and are written with an exceptional beauty of style. Not so ambitious in design as the novels, which contain an epoch, each of these stories contain a man or a woman, projected with great vividness against the troubled pattern of our age. After this book, there can be no doubt of the value of Borgese's contribution to the literature of modern Italy. The stories are studies in greys, subtle, meditative, a little sad and ironical, and much concerned with the littleness of our life and with the inexorable and reasonless pressure of the forces which compel it to its reluctant ends.

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"Arcano è tutto,
Fuor che il nostro dolor. Negletta prole
Nascemmo al pianto, e la ragione in grembo
De' celesti si posa,"

writes Leopardi. This is the undercurrent of all Borgese's writings; and it is a message so universal, and he expresses it with art so consummate and tender, that it may one day make him, despite the natural limitations of his talent, a very fine writer. That Borgese has a masterpiece in him, one cannot well doubt. Whether he will ever commit it to paper is, like the reason of our tears, on the lap of the Immortals. Borgese has come late to creative writing, and he has come handicapped by a critical faculty almost too sophisticated and sharp to admit the miracle of spontaneous creation. This, of course, is a point of pure conjecture, but it is an interesting speculation. Before his advent in the field of creative literature, Borgese was possibly second only to Croce among the critics of Italy. His culture embraces the best that the modern world has to offer; his point of view is notably sound and rational; he possesses a charming prose style,

perfectly sufficient for every literary purpose; he has given evidence of a flexibility of method capable of ranging from Realism to Expressionism, without accepting the defects of either; he is a minute and discerning observer of life; and he is now at the summit of his presumable powers. His career should be an interesting laboratory case in the psychology of the critic as artist. Precedent, is against him; the stars, his record, and every item of his formidable artistic equipment are on his side. Should his future performances justify all that we hope for him, we shall rejoice. Should they not, we shall still have had enough.

DETLEV VON LILIENCRON
AND RICHARD DEHMEL

AMONG the writers who have contributed the most valuable service in preparing the way for the contemporary movement in German literature, Detlev von Liliencron and Richard Dehmel occupy a conspicuous place. There is hardly a poet in Germany to-day who does not owe to one or the other of them some debt of art or of liberation. The two poets have many qualities in common. Both, coming late to literature, had learned to live before they learned to write. Both, in beginning their artistic careers as mature men of the world, discarded at the outset the artifices and evasions of polite literature and the claques of schools, striving to make their art an honest instrument of personal expression and to lend it the direct accents of full-bodied humanity. Arising on the tide of the German Naturalistic reaction, each developed his art a little outside of the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of his age, eventually creating an atmosphere of his own in which his personal expression could achieve its most robust growth.

In his address at the memorial services held for Liliencron at the Artists' House in Dresden, a few months after the poet's death, in 1909, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Liliencron's comrade and biographer, remarked especially the completeness with which his friend was what Goethe called "a Nature." Those who knew Liliencron, or who have had otherwise communicated to them the vast enthusiasm which the poet's contemporaries felt for his

vigorous and humane personality, understand perfectly what Bierbaum meant when he said that "the human genius in Liliencron was greater than its poetic expression—save for that, we might have named him with Byron." Liliencron was clearly a man before he was an artist. Born at Kiel, in 1844, of an old Schleswig-Holstein family, he entered the army at an early age. He served with distinction in the 1866 campaign in Bohemia and in that of 1870-1871 in France, rising to the rank of a captain. He was wounded in both campaigns. Unable, by reason of his poverty, to support his commission in peace time, Liliencron retired from the army after the Franco-Prussian war and came to the United States, where he had connections through his mother, a Von Harten of Philadelphia and a daughter of General von Harten, of Washington's staff. His American venture was a total failure and, after several miserable years, Liliencron returned to the remnant of his baronial estate in Holstein, where he remained until 1887, when the success of his first three books took him to Hamburg (in the civil service) and afterwards to Munich.

But Liliencron's heart was never in buckram. In a brief autobiographical sketch, contributed to a contemporary anthology, he writes: "My boyhood years were lonely ones; the shadow of Denmark was upon them. I gathered little from all my schooling; only history fascinated me, as it still does to-day. Mathematics, still a closed door to me, embittered my earliest years. My joy was in the open, in the fields. A day with dog and gun, in wood, field, or thicket, remains to me the only kind of day worth living. Soldiering had always been my dream, but I had to go to Prussia to make it come true. I had the luck to

be tossed actively about in my years of service; I saw seven provinces, seventeen garrisons; I came to know my country and my countrymen . . . Oh, those glorious years as a young officer! The good friends and comrades; the fine acceptance of duty and service; the subduing of self! . . . I was thirty years old when I wrote, accidentally, my first poem. . . .”

In *Masks and Minstrels of New Germany*, that excellent little book in which, fifteen years ago, Percival Pol-lard gave the first account in English of an advanced cultural movement which has already borne its fruits and passed into the mists of literary history, the story is told of how Liliencron, in going through a bundle of old letters, came upon a battle picture which, bringing back the memories of his youth, awakened in him an emotion which he tried to express in a few verses scribbled on the back of the relic. The anecdote is so pretty that one wishes it might be true. But if such were not really the beginning of Liliencron’s literary career, it might well have been, for all of his poems bear the unmistakable mark of spontaneous emotional creation. The appearance of his first volume of verse, *Adjutantenritte und Andere Gedichte*, in 1883, is an event in German literature comparable with the publication of Kipling’s *Departmental Ditties* three years afterwards; and these immeasurably finer poems of Liliencron’s have since held a place in the heart of the German soldier even higher than that which the verses of Kipling are supposed to enjoy with the British Tommy. All that *Adjutantenritte* promised was more than fulfilled in the succeeding volumes, *Der Heidegänger* and *Bunte Beute*, published respectively ten and twenty years later. Here was a man, standing erect

and singing the songs of men—songs of war and of the chase, of human passions and human emotions—in a frank, clear utterance that cared for naught save honesty, but achieved much else besides. And all that he did not fully express in his poetry, he elaborated in the short stories in his volumes *Eine Sommerschlacht*, *Unter Flatternden Fahnen*, *Der Mäcen* and *Krieg und Frieden*, which Pollard has so aptly compared with the war stories of Ambrose Bierce. It is a safe conjecture that, although only a handful of Liliencron's verses may live, a dozen of these stories will enter into the classic literature of Germany.

Liliencron had all that he needed of fame during his lifetime; and if the vigor and outrightness of his expression at first offended the multitude, these very qualities helped to secure him the esteem of those few by whom alone an original talent may be rightly judged. His present reputation suffers somewhat from the iconoclasm of the young, from the singular astigmatism of history which makes the epoch which, we have just passed seem more remote to us than another passed a century ago, and above all, from the circumstance that Liliencron wrote too much and without artistic tact—that, lacking an accurately functioning faculty of self-criticism, he allowed his writings to be published in an imperfect state, and preferred of his works such a confection as his humorous epic *Poggfred* to his splendid ballads, or an allegorical tidbit like *Hetzjagd* to his powerful realistic prose. Finally, because Liliencron was an old-school German officer in every fiber of his being, and in this sense, almost as removed from the sympathy of young Germany as from our own.

But the whole genius of Liliencron's writings lies in their spontaneity; in the perfect naturalness of their thought and diction, whatever the faults of these qualities may be. Living and exulting in action, he translated rugged action into his poems and stories. If he had attempted revision, he would doubtless have taken away, not their imperfections, but that very impact of living experience which we find to be their most moving quality. He lived as naturally as he wrote, cherishing his independence, accepting the inconveniences of poverty, seeking the graces of love and friendship, and all the while, stoutly maintaining his pride as a man, an aristocrat, an officer, and a German.

Richard Dehmel is a similar, but more tranquil and elegant figure. It is as singular as it is pleasant to note that these two poets, united by repute for good and ill, sharing many characteristics and the same critical pigeon-hole, esteemed each other highly, and were at contest in life only to see which could render the other the greater praise. Both, in a sense, sprang from Nietzsche, but both freed themselves of their great master's influence as soon as they had found their own wings. Dehmel, in taking his motif from Liliencron, intellectualized what had always remained to the older poet a half-physical instinct, and carried it into the realm of pure art. Liliencron is probably the more loved poet of the two, but Dehmel is the finer artist, the more supple craftsman, and the better thinker. Both are idealists, but whereas Liliencron never half realizes what it is that he seeks, Dehmel has his goal clearly before him. The guarded city which the bluff old soldier, who could never conquer mathematics, tries to take by assault, the subtle, introspective insurance ex-

pert attacks by Vauban's method, with sappers and mines. Liliencron's tactics are those of the poet; Dehmel's are those of the philosopher.

In Dehmel's verse, we find chiefly an expression of the struggle between man's physical being and his spiritual aspirations. The scandal of his erotic poems is somewhat too well remembered, since these (*Die Vorwandlungen der Venus*) constitute an organic part of the poet's self-expression, and are numerically less excessive than the agitation of the puritans would lead one to believe them. This exaggeration, which leaves out of account the compulsion of Dehmel's eroticism and its Faust-like spirit which makes him, in the words of Leo Berg, "love like an analytical philosopher and philosophize like a lover," obstructs a true estimate of the excellence of Dehmel's verse. Like Liliencron, Dehmel aspires to nothing less than absolute expression. He essays this with deliberate earnestness, in full consciousness of its perils, as a sort of self-documentation and self-analysis whereby he may presently approach his ultimate goal of perfection. The concrete human semblance which this ideal assumes for Dehmel proves him almost a better philosopher than a lyric poet has a right to be.

Dehmel is the clearest type of the philosophical poet in German literature since Friedrich Schiller. He is, by nature, a mystic, an intrepid seeker of that hidden ecstasy wherein the liberated spirit of the free individual meets and is one with the stream of the universe. In his search for this point of ultimate contact, which is to him the whole essence of life and which he designates, in the cliché of mysticism, as the "Great Love," Dehmel attempts to resolve life to its elements, hoping to discover

a key to the mystery in the orgasms of common crises—hatred, sacrifice, lust, love, marriage, parenthood. In his essay on “Der Wille zur Tat,” he expounds his theory concerning the physical conditions which precipitate every psychical change. “As soon as the spirit knows of nothing else but its instincts,” he says, “the essential wisdom of amorous folly and the Great Love will be revealed to it”; and again, “Whatever delights, terrifies, or shocks man, redeems him, since it expands him and fills him with life.” His choice of sexual love as the conspicuous symbol of this desideratum, preceded in the rites of the Phoenician Astarte and advanced to-day by Germans so diverse as Hauptmann and Werfel, is directly in the spirit of all cosmic mysticism.

The most complete statement of Dehmel’s philosophy is that found in his so-called “novel in ballads,” *Zwei Menschen*. *Zwei Menschen* contains, besides some of the dullest strophes which Dehmel has written, some of the poet’s finest and most ambitious work. It is composed of three sequences of ballads, each book containing thirty-six poems of thirty-six lines. This structure is artificial and unnecessarily confining, but the poem is studded with isolated passages of such astounding beauty that Dehmel’s admirers will not willingly permit it to slip into the oblivion which the banality of the whole deserves. The fictional scheme upon which the poem is built is exceedingly flimsy. The eternal Man and Woman, Lukas and Lea, are drawn together by the urgency of an impulsive love. Both are already bound by conventional ties. In order to make their union possible, Lukas deserts his wife, who dies of grief. Lea not only leaves her husband, but in order to obliterate the last bond which might

draw her to the old life, poisons her blind child. The love of Lea and Lukas is therefore founded upon criminal violences, which hold the lovers the more securely together in their isolation before the world. Then comes the struggle between the objectivity of the man and the woman's subjectivity; Lukas's insistence upon Lea's complete submission, Lea's concealed defense of her personal integrity, and her final renunciation. Then, the ecstasy of their physical communion. Then, the gradual transmission of this physical oneness into the sphere of the spiritual; and finally, the consummation of their love in a perfect singularity, at once physical and spiritual, wherein the lovers become the visible symbol of universal love. Thereafter, since such an exaltation as this cannot be perpetuated without suffering the indignities of the commonplace, Lukas and Lea may not remain together. Dehmel contrives their parting by involving Lukas in a Nihilist plot for which he is exiled, making the lovers deliberately choose this occasion for the separation of their ways.

Dehmel's indebtedness to Nietzsche for the principle of dynamic ethics, "jenseits von Gut und Böse," which underlies his philosophy, is apparent. He believes in creation out of the depths, in the anguished pilgrimage of the soul from the most base to the most exalted, in the creative force of every human passion; in a word, he believes in life, and believing in life, he has confidence that life may be ennobled by and within its own substance. In one of his poems, "Der Befreite Prometheus," he describes the despair of the titan when, released from his long torture, he returns to the race in whose cause he has suffered so many torments and finds it as petty in its selfishness, its greed, its hatred, and its envy, as it had been before

his tragic gift. In his wrath, Prometheus lifts his hand against this beautiful but unworthy world, when he observes two men, formerly at enmity, who, their quarrel forgotten in the common misfortune, rescue one another from the furious elements, and embrace. That solitary impulsive expression of the spirit of man gives Prometheus his faith again, and he offers thanks to Zeus that the reconciliation of two mortals can thus expiate all the rancors of their miserable race. For of such is the fulfillment which Dehmel seeks: life vindicating itself, not in its norm, but at its highest. In the seriousness of this aspiration, Dehmel takes on a dual significance as the most passionate individualist, yet one of the most socially conscious rhapsodists in German poetry.

The facts of Dehmel's life are scanty. He was born in 1863, in Wendisch-Hermsdorf, near the Spreewald, his father being a forester. After an orthodox education at Kremmen, Berlin, and Danzig, which his unorthodox scholastic proclivities considerably disturbed, he took his doctorate at Leipzig with a thesis on insurance, and thereupon became secretary of the German fire insurance underwriters' association. He held this position until 1895, when he retired in order to devote himself exclusively to poetry. His first books, *Aber die Liebe*, *Erlösungen* and *Lebensblätter*, were produced in this period, and his *Weib und Welt*, his tragi-comedy *Der Mitmensch*, his pantomimic drama *Lucifer*, and his child verses *Fitzebutze*, appeared in rapid succession in the years following his liberation.

Dehmel possessed a disposition sensitive and introspective beneath a mask of impenetrable reserve, of the type which experiences deeply and feels life with excru-

ciating poignancy, while presenting an apparently untroubled countenance to the world. Tormented as he was by the contradictory impulses of his physico-spiritual duality, his emotional experiences were exceptionally rich. To take one instance only, we know with what difficulty he disciplined his robust erotic nature in his youth, and how, in his two marriages, he found the successive stages of the spiritual consummation which he sought. One feels these conflicts in his poetry, and one surmises the stages of his struggle for integrity in the growth of his artistic personality and in the gradual synthesis of his idealism. The poet in Dehmel is very close to the man, in an intimacy seldom felt in modern poetry. Such a union of personal and esthetic sincerity is highly favorable to the production of superior art. That Dehmel, possessing so much, missed greatness, is the whim of that chance which prevented him from fully achieving the synthesis which he desired, and from perfectly disciplining his art to its expression.

LUIGI PIRANDELLO

IN a sense, it may be said that the philosophy of Luigi Pirandello, the dramatist, begins with his early novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. This extraordinary romance of shifting identities, which is reputed to have encouraged the experiments of Chiarelli, Luigi Antonelli, Rosso di San Secondo, and their companions of the Italian school of the grotesque, contains the germs of most of the conceptions of life and art which its author has since developed with such inexhaustible virtuosity in his plays. Written twenty years ago, in the heyday of d'Annunzian romanticism, *Il fu Mattia Pascal* is, in the first place, notably original in design and treatment, which is a virtue. It is also clever, and this is the fault which has repeatedly forbidden Pirandello entrance to that realm of artistic greatness which we sometimes feel to be his natural birthright. It is suave and unaffected in style; and in plot, well defined, logically developed, and, in spite of its arbitrary novelty, artistically persuasive.

These are merely external characteristics. But structural details are, in this case, important, for by his exceptionally well calculated craftsmanship, Pirandello has not only lent Italian fiction and drama a new expressiveness and fluency, but he has been able to garb purely metaphysical conceptions in dramatic form and make them popular before an immense and fantastically mixed public. Let us say at once that Pirandello is one of the world's most ingenious literary swashbucklers. He has

created a long series of revolutions in Italian fiction and, particularly, in the Italian theater; and, instead of giving his public what it has wanted, has made it clamor for exactly what he has chosen to give it. The salutary influence of Pirandello's early novel, *Il fu Mattia Pascal*, on the young Italian writers has been frequently noted, sometimes with too much generosity, by the critics. The importance of his short stories has been commented upon as frequently, and we have heard so much of the technical innovations in Pirandello's plays that their genuine dramatic merit and their quasi-philosophical import have been unduly obscured.

The truth is, that Pirandello's originality has been talked about entirely too much. His technical originality, far from being his virtue, is his most perilous dissipation, and it has defeated his higher artistic purposes at least as often as it has abetted them. And upon closer scrutiny, it does not appear as extraordinary or as absolute a quantity as it does at first view. *Il fu Mattia Pascal* is, indeed, a pathfinder among novels, but it is a pathfinder marking with a surer step, a route already fairly well defined. Some of Pirandello's stories are ingenious, some even possess the unforgettable quality of great art; but in the volumes thus far issued of the proposed collected edition of his short stories—the *Novelle per un Anno*, arranged in the form of a sort of Decameron of 365 tales—one finds that a dismaying preponderance of the stories are utterly trivial, that some are positively dreary, and that many—a great many!—are strongly influenced, chiefly by the author's greater countryman, the Sicilian Giovanni Verga. The true value of Pirandello's fiction as a method of laboratory notation may be observed by comparing his

plays with the stories from which some of them are derived—*Così è (se vi Pare!)* from the novella "La Signora Frola e il Signor Ponza, suo genero," in *E Domani, Lunedì*; *Il Signore delle Nave* from a monologue in the same volume; *La Giara* and *Pensaci, Giacomino!* from novelle in *Terzetti*; *L'Altro Figlio* from another in *Erma Bifronte*, etc.

Finally, there is so much to say for and against Pirandello's dramaturgy, that the discussion can hardly be broached when other matters press. Pirandello means even more to the modern theater than his most enthusiastic apologists claim; but to our mind, the least significant aspect of his plays is their purely technical novelty. For again we must say that Pirandello has originated in the theater in the same sense that he has originated in fiction. By repeating and elaborating that triumph in a more felicitous vehicle, he has gone considerably farther. He is an expert manipulator of theatrical effects, and his facility is so exceptional as to bear the weight of an original creation. Above all, he is an eminently practical experimenter. But, however eager we may be to give Pirandello his full measure of praise, the first thing which we must understand clearly about him is that he is not another Shaw. If he were, he would be less Pirandello. For, so far as the mechanics of the theater are concerned, it has been Pirandello's part, not to create a theater, but to adapt the existing theater, successfully in both the artistic and the financial sense, to the dissemination of his philosophical conceptions.

The term "Pirandellismo" has been created to define a quantity which cannot be as explicitly expressed by any other word. But this quantity is an attitude, a process

of envisaging life, rather than a specific theatrical formula. Luigi Pirandello, the dramatist, is closer to Bernard Shaw than to any of his contemporaries. Both are cerebralists exclusively concerned with ideas and employing the theater, with remarkable facility, for the purposes of exposition and propagation. But whereas Shaw is almost always dull in the theater, Pirandello is invariably vivid and interesting. Shaw's plays are better reading than they are theater; Pirandello's are good, but uneven, reading, and in intelligent interpretations, more than half the time capital theater. The difference is certainly not that the ideas of one are in themselves more dramatic than those of the other; but merely that Pirandello, as an ingenious pamphleteer, poises his conceptions more expertly for the stage and takes more elaborate pains to embody them in characters and situations which will have both meaning and interest to his audiences. It is a curious fact that both came to the drama after having served their apprenticeship as novelists, and that neither were notably successful in their earlier profession. But whereas *Cashel Byron's Profession*, *The Irrational Knot* and *An Unsocial Socialist* are merely dreary and inept novels, those of Luigi Pirandello have the much more exasperating fault of being at times half splendid, without ever quite achieving even the degree of sustained excellence which we would require of a competent, but mediocre, story-teller.

There is some reason for the neglect of the public during the thirty years that Pirandello devoted to fiction before (in 1910) he began writing for the stage. His pen was too facile; his novels too often fell short of the excellence which might have raised them to the significance of *Il fu Mattia Pascal*. These novels, these short stories,

were good; but they were not good enough. The narrative form was not adequate to crystallize the idea which was slowly taking form in Pirandello's consciousness. So, in the fullness of time, because Pirandello is at bottom an artist, because he is genuinely talented, and because he is sincere, when at length he was ready to speak conclusively, and not before, the appropriate form came to him with this creative maturity. Such a fulfillment is one of the eternal mysteries of art. In the case of Luigi Pirandello, it is proved by the success with which he has recast many of even his ineffectual short stories into dramatic form and, in a more limited sense, by the perfect expressiveness of each of his plays.

We do not mean that all of Pirandello's plays are equally successful as theatrical vehicles. We mean simply that most of them, either when read or when witnessed upon a stage (for there are some to be read and others to be acted), are successful as dramatic representations of ideas. Despite his enormous celebrity in Italy, many of Pirandello's plays have been failures on the Italian stage: and this has been due to various causes. One is the ideological preoccupation of Pirandello's plays, which utilize situation, action, and character to the expression of novel and complicated abstractions which empty these dramatic fixtures—upon which all drama is usually centered—of life, except insofar as they are animated by the particular flair of the playwright. Another is the refusal of the dramatist, outside of reasonable considerations, to sacrifice any portion of his original conception to the exigencies of popular taste. And finally, there remain against him the mechanical disabilities of the theater; the demand of actors and public alike for certain conventionalized types,

which Pirandello has so amusingly commented upon in the letter to the heroine prefixed to the published edition of *La Ragione degli Altri*, a play which failed largely because of an unfortunate situation which drives the leading woman off the stage in the midst of her big scene in the last act and leaves the rest of the play to a less attractive character.

The metaphysical propositions upon which Luigi Pirandello plays such a multitude of variations are, in their basic essentials, quite simple. His perpetual theme is the disintegration and reintegration of the individual in the flux of life. Pirandello does not believe that a substantial, immutable individuality can exist in a society habituated to the perpetual qualifications of communal life. The individual, as he stands in the modern world, is conditioned by interlocking sequences of inherited conceptions and social responsibilities which have produced what he believes to be himself. But he is never really himself, for as an independent entity he never exists. He is what circumstance has made him, what he believes himself to be, what his neighbors imagine him. With every variation of any of these conditions or points of view, the individual changes in exact correspondence. When any one of the conceptions upon which he has so confidently established his life is disturbed, the individual as a social unit suffers rupture; and if the disturbance is fundamental, he may even be destroyed. Calderón de la Barca anticipated one aspect of this idea in a celebrated passage of *El Vida es Sueño*.

Thus, Mattia Pascal is a shiftless failure, because everybody in his native village believes him to be no more than that: but when the erroneous identification of

the vagrant suicide puts an end to Mattia Pascal, and Adriano Meis appears in Rome, with money in his pockets, Adriano Meis is almost a gentleman, because the world takes it for granted that he is one. In exactly this way, every character in Pirandello's fictions responds decisively to circumstances and to outside conviction, as to a natural compulsion which admits of no appeal. It may be that they are weak: but to resist such a terrific force, one must be more than strong. And Pirandello's characters, without exception, are ordinary people, whose lives are circumscribed in the most commonplace way.

As we have said, this tendency of Pirandello's conception of life finds a perfect focus in the dramatic form. There are two plays which, because of their characteristic structure and their exceptional success throughout Europe, come immediately to mind. *Sei Personaggi in Cerca d'Autore* contrasts a dizzy mêlée of appearances which is too familiar to require remark. *Ciàscuno a Suo Modo* is concerned with a similar comparison of what Pirandello calls the "four planes of reality," each consistent within itself, among which the characters fluctuate. In the other plays, the problems are usually specific responses of individuals to altering conceptions. In *Enrico Quarto*, a young man, injured by a fall from his horse during a costume pageant in which he has impersonated the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, believes himself to be that monarch, and when, after twenty years, he awakens to his true identity, he finds only catastrophe in the release. *Così è (se vi Pare!)* is concerned with the confusing situation of a husband who believes his first wife dead, himself married to a second, and his mother-in-law insane; a mother-in-law who believes the

first wife, her daughter, still living, and the second, a fantasy of the husband's disordered imagination; and a tactful wife who answers: "You want what? The truth? The truth is simply this: that I am the daughter of Signora Frola and the second wife of Signor Ponza. Yes, and to myself, I am nobody" . . . "I am whomever you may choose to have me!" In *Il Piacere dell'Onestà*, an irresolute wastrel agrees, for a consideration, to marry the mistress of a nobleman, in order to shelter their guilt; and in the process of the deception, has the illusion of respectability so effectively thrust upon him that his whole character is altered, and he ends by taking his wife away from her erstwhile lover and forcing everybody about him to conform to his new ideas of virtue. In *Vestire gl'Ignudi*, we have a brilliant study of a woman who attempts to reconstruct an aimless life by investing it with the illusion of glamour and, having failed, destroys herself.

The illustrations may be multiplied endlessly. In *Il Berretto a Sonagli*, a jealous wife publicly accuses her husband of illicit relations with the wife of his clerk, and the scandal so obsesses the clerk that, although his wife is proved innocent, he nevertheless feels himself obliged, although he bitterly resents the necessity, to kill both his wife and his employer. The influence of outside forces is similarly described in the delightful *Pensaci, Giacomino!*, in *Tutto per Bene*, in *Come Prima, Meglio di Prima*, in *Ma non è una Cosa Seria*, and a dozen other plays. *All'Uscita*, the scene of which is laid in a cemetery where the dead—a Philosopher and a Fat Man—sit on their own graves and discourse on life and circumstance until the Fat Man's wife, murdered by her lover and thus restored to her patient husband, at length

comes to join them, is an elaborately fantastic dissertation on the same subject. A perfect representation is to be found in *La Vita ti Diendi*, with its story, rich in pathos, of an old woman whose son, after many years of complete forgetfulness, returns to her to die; and how she strives to give herself the illusion that he is still alive by corresponding in his name with his mistress, believing that he cannot be truly dead so long as he continues to live in her heart; and her despair when the latter discovers her secret, and her cry of anguish tells her that her son has indeed perished—in this play, the conception to which we have referred takes on a pathetic dignity, and the dramatic art of Luigi Pirandello arises to perhaps its noblest utterance. The effect of blind chance is studied in that amazing tragedy of coincidences, *Il Giuoco delle Parti*.

And so, throughout the long catalogue of his plays, Pirandello seeks an answer to the eternal riddle, probing everywhere and examining an interminable gallery of clinical cases with the same general results. *Pensaci, Giacomino!* is an amusing variant of the theme of *La Ragione degli Altri* (the plot of which concerns a woman, who, loving in her husband the idea of paternity rather than himself, claims his child when his mistress is about to desert him) and describes the tribulations of a gentle old provincial philosopher who, when he discovers that the young girl whom he is to marry is already involved in a liaison with a younger lover, does not allow this misfortune to disarrange his plans, but marries her, allows the affair to proceed to its too natural conclusion, and finally, when the lover has fled, goes to him with the child in his arms and, to the indignation of the townsfolk, per-

suades him to return to his convenient joys. In these two plays, in which the environmental influence which we have noted is developed less conspicuously than elsewhere, an important collateral conception of the playwright is emphasized—that society exists, not precisely in the family, but in the extra-legal social group which consists of the father, the mother, and the child, who must, at all costs, be kept together. Other plays are little more than adept arrangements of amusing situations and characters, such as *Il Giuoco delle Parti*, which concerns the conniving of an unfaithful wife to involve her husband, a mild old gentleman who knows nothing about weapons, in a duel, and the latter's cleverness in fixing the responsibility instead upon her lover, who is killed.

It follows that, despite the astonishing deftness and fertility of his theatrical artifices, his sensible acceptance of the necessity of adaptation, and his resourcefulness in the performance, Pirandello's plays bear the conviction of life through the realism inherent in the ideas which they express, and not through any organic reality of action or character. There is, in fact, not one in the multitudinous gallery of his characters that really lives as a person; one and all, they live as the physical embodiments of ideas and relationships. This explains the unusual burden which Pirandello imposes upon his producers in the matter of representation, upon his actors in the matter of interpretation, and upon his audiences in the matter of understanding. These, each in his own way, must collaborate to lend physical reality to the dramatic situations implicit in the author's ideas.

As an artist, the situation of Luigi Pirandello is extremely doubtful; but as a dramatist, he is one of the

most interesting phenomena of our generation. He has perfected an attitude to life which, if it be not systematic, is at least consistent and distinguished. In the theater, he has succeeded by an almost phenomenal cleverness in extending the drama of ideas in a new form, and in adapting this form to the requirements of a mixed public. This is in itself, from the point of view of the theater, an achievement of the first importance, for Pirandello's success has conclusively established the proposition that the dramatic crises of the mind are as vivid and absorbing as those of the emotions. To estimate Pirandello's success in this respect, we must grant that the theater is by its nature a popular vehicle, and that a popular vehicle can be successful only when it is made emotionally convincing and intellectually interesting to a typical public. In this respect, Pirandello has succeeded where Shaw, on the whole, has failed.

Luigi Pirandello was born in Girgenti, Sicily, on the 28th of June 1867. He studied at the University of Rome and took his doctorate, with honors in philosophy and philology, at the University of Bonn. Upon his return to Italy, he entered the teaching profession, and since 1907 has been a professor in the Istituto Superiore di Magistero Femminile, the women's higher normal school at Rome. His literary career began as early as 1889 with a volume of poems and some short stories, which excited no interest. He began writing plays in 1910, and in the thirty years preceding had published about four hundred novels and short stories. His general works include *L'Umore*, a penetrating study of the nature of humor, in which many of his most characteristic ideas may be

traced; a treatise in German on the Sicilian dialect, *Laute und Lautentwicklung der Mundart von Girgenti*; a translation of Goethe's *Roman Elegies*, and a version of *The Cyclops*, of Euripides, in Sicilian. He is the founder of the Teatro d'Arte, in Rome.

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